



**The Ends of Utopian Thinking:
Marx, Adorno, Bloch**

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October 2017

This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Abstract

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My dissertation is concerned with utopian thinking in Critical Theory. It examines the changing conceptions of radically different social orders held by the associates of the Frankfurt School. Its aim is to investigate utopian thinking as a theoretical tool of a system of thought that is oriented towards social transformation. To bring about social transformation was the explicit objective of the Frankfurt School. And yet, as my dissertation demonstrates, some of the key member of the Frankfurt School discarded precisely this utopian tool. This rejection of utopian thinking is one of the central – but also one of the most problematic – aspects of Critical Theory. It goes back to the writings of Marx himself and culminates in the works of Theodor W. Adorno, specifically in his 'Utopieverbot' (prohibition of envisaging a utopian society). I argue that this Utopieverbot facilitated the disappearance of utopian thinking in Critical Theory, and furthermore, that it brought this system of thought to a standstill. In addition to the dissolution of utopian thinking my dissertation examines also its potential resuscitation. The foremost defender of utopian thinking I investigate is Ernst Bloch, a critical theorist overshadowed by Adorno himself. Countering Adorno, Bloch posited utopian thinking not only as a possible but also as a necessary theoretical tool of Critical Theory. I argue that Bloch's ideas can be valuable in resolving the aporia of utopian thinking in Critical Theory. While important in its own right, this aporia is highly significant due to the enormous influence it exerted on the death of utopia in Western political thought, which can be seen as one of the key factors contributing to the escalating social, political and economic regressions of our contemporary era. Understanding the reasons behind the emergence of death of utopia, as well as its possible resolutions, thus present questions that urgently need to be addressed.

When you walk through a storm
Hold your head up high
And don't be afraid of the dark
At the end of a storm
There's a golden sky
And the sweet silver song of a lark
Walk on through the wind
Walk on through the rain
Though your dreams be tossed and blown
Walk on, walk on
With hope in your heart
And you'll never walk alone.

'You will never walk alone', Oscar Hammerstein II

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Prefatory Declarations

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of any work done in collaboration. It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution.

This dissertation does not exceed the word limit prescribed by the Degree Committee of the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages, University of Cambridge.

This dissertation is formatted in conformity with the Handbook for Authors, Editors, and Writers of Theses of the Modern Humanities Research Association.

Santa Barbara, 17 October 2017.

Acknowledgements

This project was undertaken with the financial support of a doctoral scholarship from the Public Scholarship, Development, Disability and Maintenance Fund of the Republic of Slovenia, the Hanseatic Scholarship awarded by the Alfred Toepfer Stiftung and a grant received from the Tiarks German Scholarship Fund at the Department of German and Dutch, University of Cambridge.

Sincerest thanks go to my supervisor Martin A. Ruehl, whose support and advice have been unfaltering over the course of my Ph.D. I hope that this piece in its finished form can in some way express my gratitude to him.

A number of other people have helped me immensely at various stages of my project. I am grateful to Cat Moir, with whom I held regular supervisions during her time in Cambridge in my first year. Cat was the person who initially introduced me to the writings of Marx and Bloch. Since the end of the first year, Eva von Redecker, has strongly shaped my academic work. I extend my gratitude to her for the most useful references and for encouragement when I needed it most. For interest in my work and his invaluable feedback on it, I am grateful to Lukas Kübler.

I would also like to thank Johan Siebers for the detailed feedback I received on an earlier version of my two chapters on Bloch, as well as Daniel Weiss, Ruth Levitas and Ivan Boldyrev with whom I had valuable discussions on various shorter sections of my manuscript. The experiences I enjoyed over the course of the year I spent at the Humboldt Universität in Berlin have substantially shaped the final outcome of my project. I thank especially Rahel Jaeggi for the opportunity to attend her colloquium.

I am lucky to have had a host of dedicated friends, whose willingness to read, discuss, and offer moral support I have been able to rely on. Above all I have in mind my friends with whom I happened to live over the last few years either on the Mawson Road in Cambridge or in Mesendorf in Germany. Alicia, Aurelie, Vasiliki,

Eva, Mahvish, Lucy, Chris, Kusha, Torsten, and others, thank you. Thank you also to Milana and Gil; and to Polly, Chris, Iwona and Felix, who have held my spirit high during the difficult final months of writing. To Polly and Chris I am grateful also for their careful proofreading of the thesis.

I would also like to extend my thanks to Ulrike Balser for her dedicated support with the administrative difficulties I was experiencing during my first few months, and for answering any question I had for her since then; and to all the staff at the University Library where I spent most of my days during the Ph.D.

And thank you, finally, to my parents, Anja and Borut, and my brothers, Arne and Robin, for always being there.

Abbreviations and Translations

Karl Marx

MEW — *Marx/Engels Werke*, in 43 volumes, ed. by Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1959–1983)

Theodor W. Adorno

GS — *Theodor W. Adorno, Gesammelte Schriften*, in 20 volumes, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann in collaboration with Gretel Adorno, Susan Buck-Morss und Klaus Schultz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971–86)

NS — *Theodor W. Adorno, Nachgelassene Schriften*, Section IV: Vorlesungen, in 18 volumes, ed. by Theodor W. Adorno Archiv (1995 –)

Ernst Bloch

GA — *Ernst Bloch, Gesamtausgabe*, in 16 volumes and one additional volume (Ergänzungsband) (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1959–85)

The citations of German texts in the body of the text have been translated into English. I have indicated all consulted translations in the Bibliography. Where necessary, I have modified consulted translations to bring them closer to the original. Where no translated edition was available, translations are my own. In cases in which I considered the English translation inadequate I have also provided the German original in the brackets or footnotes.

Introduction

Over the last fifty years utopian thinking has been dispossessed of its political purpose. In its inception, in Thomas More's novel *Utopia*, this activity of imagining an infinitely more desirable society of the future, carried both a political and an artistic value. The detachment of utopian thinking from politics has been acknowledged by many social observers and scholars. Most recently, in his introduction to the edited volume on the *Political Uses of Utopia*, James Ingram notes that the gap between the two domains of politics and utopia, which began to open up five or six decades ago, has now become firmly entrenched.¹ Similarly, the Marxist philosopher Frederic Jameson talks of the ongoing 'waning of the utopian idea', and the social psychologist Harald Welzer of 'the loss of utopian thinking'.² Even in the sphere of left-wing activism, politics seems to have been bereaved of utopia. As Bini Adamczak observes, what marked the most sizeable anti-capitalist movements in the 1990s and 2000s — the Zapatistas in Chiapas in 1994, the anti-globalisation protests in Seattle in 1999, and in Genoa in 2001— was that their appeal to the wider public stemmed from the slogan 'another world is possible', with no thought for what this other world could be, what it would look like, and when it might arrive.³

For Jameson, this exhaustion of readily available utopian visions is intertwined with the loss of the *idea* of utopia.⁴ That is, the disappearance of concrete visions of radically different social forms from the realm of politics is closely linked with the disappearance of the concept or the idea of utopia as observed in the conceptual, intellectual, or philosophical realm. 'It is difficult', Jameson observes, 'to imagine any

¹ James D. Ingram, 'Introduction: Utopia and Politics' in *Political Uses of Utopia: New Marxist, Anarchist, and Radical Democratic Perspectives*, ed. by S. D. Chrostowska and James D. Ingram (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), p. xi.

² Frederic Jameson, 'The Politics of Utopia', *New Left Review*, 25 (2004), p. 36; cf. Mohamed Amjahid and Gero von Randow, 'Utopien: Sehnsucht ohne Ort? Von wegen!', *Die Zeit*, 52 (2016), p. 15.

³ Bini Adamczak, *Kommunismus, kleine geschichte, wie es endlich anders wird* (Münster: Unrast Verlag, 2014), p. 76.

⁴ Jameson, 'The Politics of Utopia', p. 36.

radical political programme today without the conception of systemic otherness, of an alternate society'. This conception of 'systemic otherness', Jameson explains, can be kept alive only by 'the idea of utopia'.⁵ While the lasting disappearance of this idea is a more recent phenomenon, utopian thinking has always been entangled with criticism and opposition. As soon as the concept of utopia entered the political discourse in the mid-nineteenth century, its connotation was negative: 'utopian' was used above all to mark alternative political views as absurd or impossible.⁶ This negative historical use of the concept in political discourse, however, needs to be distinguished from the criticism and rejection of the concept itself, which dates back only to the interwar era. By seeing the functions of utopia and utopian thinking as negative, and specifically as destructive to desirable social change, this criticism discredits utopia itself and thereby denies it its place in politics.

This denial can in part be traced to the identification of utopianism with totalitarianism. To a large degree this identification was influenced by historical conditions, in particular by the adverse experiences of the Soviet communist regime. As became increasingly apparent during the Cold War, especially in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, this regime degenerated irretrievably, lapsing into an oppressive and totalitarian one. The fact that this regime was premised on a social conception of communism, an ideal of a society that was highly appealing (at least to some), and which (at least in some respects) differed markedly from a capitalist one, was perceived as constitutive of the condensation of power into the hands of just a few and their subsequent abuse of that power. In short, the mere existence of a utopian vision was blamed for the transformation of communist societies into totalitarian ones.

This argument is, however, not as self-evident as it may seem in the present moment. That utopianism can in fact be identified with totalitarianism is an argument made above all by the ideological founders of neoliberalism, such as Friedrich Hayek and Karl Popper.⁷ The rationale of this criticism of utopian thinking,

⁵ Jameson, 'The Politics of Utopia', p. 36.

⁶ Lucian Hölscher, 'Utopie', *Utopian Studies*, 7:2 (1996), 1-65 (pp. 27-30).

⁷ See Russell Jacoby, 'Karl Popper, Isaiah Berlin, and the Anti-Utopian Refugees', in *The Temptation of Hope*, ed. by Klaus L. Berghahn (Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag, 2011), pp. 49-64 (p. 51).

expressed implicitly in Hayek's *Road to Serfdom* (1944) and Popper's *The Open Society and its Enemies* (1945), rests on two claims. First, as history has taught us through the case not only of Stalinism but also of Nazism, totalitarianism is inseparable from coercion, violence and terror. Second these totalitarian regimes were all founded on utopian ideals. The conclusion that follows from these claims is that violence, terror and coercion are also inseparable from utopia. This identification of utopianism with totalitarianism is also explicitly expressed in a short lecture 'Utopia and Violence' delivered by Popper in 1947.⁸ In this lecture Popper notes that irrespective of the benevolence of its ends, utopia 'does not bring happiness'.⁹ Instead, he suggests, it brings 'only the familiar misery of being condemned to live under a tyrannical government'.¹⁰ The justification of this assertion is the following: given that one person can convince another person who is of a different opinion only by rational argument or violence, and given that utopian ideals cannot be agreed on by the means of the former (what happiness is and what a 'happy' society looks like are questions of purely subjective preference), an attempt to realise utopia is compelled 'to use violence'.¹¹ This violence includes not only 'propaganda, the suppression of criticism, and the annihilation of all opposition' but moreover 'crushing', 'eliminating', and 'stamping out all heretical competing views'.¹²

This line of argument, which has been reinvigorated in the twenty-first century through the works such as John Gray's *Black Mass: Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia* (2007), has been heavily criticised. The critics, mostly of more left-leaning political convictions, agree above all that this position hinges on a very specific definition of utopia as 'a static, perfect and harmonious whole, at odds with the complexity of the real world'.¹³ They highlight other ideological generalisations and assumptions entailed in this position, such as the assertion that any state intervention necessarily slides into totalitarianism, and point, moreover, to an ideological rationale of this position: construing utopia as dangerous in this way

⁸ Karl Popper, 'Utopia and Violence', *World Affairs*, 149:1 (1947), 3-9.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹³ Ruth Levitas, *Utopia as Method: The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2013), p. 7. See also p. 10.

simply supports, and thus empowers the conservative view that there is no alternative to the present.

It is easy for the left-wing critics to defend utopia against its conservative attacks. This criticism might leave the impression that the Left has always been on the defensive when it comes to utopia, and has always perceived the role of utopian thinking as a positive one. Yet this is not the case. Within the theoretical heritage of the Left too, utopian thinking has had an ambivalent status. Marx, after all, was fervently anti-utopian, and so are some of his disciples. Marx famously claimed that philosophers should not concern themselves with writing 'recipes' for 'die Garküche der Zukunft'.¹⁴

The blow to utopia from the Left might even have been more decisive for its death than the liberal attacks have been. After all, the Left is utopia's proper home. It is not, to be sure, utopia's exclusive home, for utopian thinking lives on both extremes of the political spectrum. From Hitler to Breivik, various far-right ideologues have envisaged a society that certainly is radically different from the existing one. Yet, the very demand to institute a different society is more typical of the Left than the Right. Moreover, the history of utopian thinking overlaps significantly with the intellectual heritage of the Left. This overlap is located in the idea of a classless, stateless society based on the communal ownership of property and wealth. Although in Western thought this idea stretches back all the way to antiquity and early Christianity, it culminated in the socialist and communist movements of the mid-nineteenth century, of which Marx was a key creator and representative. As such, Marx can hardly be held directly responsible for the death of utopia. Despite his objections to utopian thinking, it was very much alive in his own writings. Marx and Engels's *Communist Manifesto*, one of the most influential works from the period of the latter half of this century, clearly sets out the principle features of a communist society. In the form of communism, utopia too endured and utopian thinking thrived. Many parties and movements identified themselves with this label. Indeed, communism was far more than a label at this time: revolutionaries attempted to realize it in

¹⁴ Marx, 'Nachwort zur zweiten Auflage', *Das Kapital, Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie*, Vol. I, MEW, Vol. 23, pp. 18-29 (p. 25).

practice in the Revolutions of 1848 and 1849, the Paris Commune in 1871, the 1917 revolutions in the Russian Empire, and the 1918 November Revolution in Germany.

In one sense or the other, all these revolutions are perceived to have failed. The French and German communists were crushed within months after they had set off, whereas the Russian Revolution — even if it appeared to have succeeded at the time — resulted in a social order far removed from the conceptual ideal of communism. Today, communism has basically disappeared as a state-level political regime. Stalinist Russia is gone, Maoist China has transformed into a nakedly capitalist country, and the prospects of communism in Cuba and Venezuela are darkening.

Since the intellectual currents of communism and utopian thinking thoroughly intersect with one another, the historical failures of communism themselves negatively affected the reputation of utopian thinking. However, these events also opened up the space for certain conceptual modifications of utopian thinking. They opened up a space in which novel understandings could have been accepted and proven lasting. These historical conditions can perhaps be understood as a kind of emptiness, or ground zero. By the end of the Second World War, communism was losing its popular and intellectual base as an alternative to the ever more powerful capitalism. Those opposing capitalism had no ‘ready-made’ alternative to turn to. It could be said that, on the one hand, these conditions called for a new, third alternative to be proposed, or, at least, for the idea of communism to undergo a substantial revision. On the other hand these conditions raised the more fundamental question of whether a conception of such an alternative should be available in the first place. If Marx himself did not face this question, his twentieth-century followers did.

Given the influence Marx’s writings exercised on later Marxist thinkers, his objections certainly contributed, indirectly, to the ensuing decline of utopian thinking. Marx, however, played a very direct role in making this question worth entertaining at all. First, as I have already suggested, Marx’s thought is marked by a certain paradox as far as utopian thinking is concerned: on the one hand he was vocal in his criticism of those communists and socialists he considered to be preoccupied with outlining and describing the nature and features of the social systems they advocated; on the other hand, Marx himself, to a certain extent,

participated in creating these outlines. If Marx was a utopian thinker himself, why was he also critical of such thinking? The political battles Marx fought with the competing communists and socialists, as well as his own idiosyncratic usage of the label 'utopian', begin to explain this paradox entailed in his thought. Yet they explain it only partially, and all those who adopted his philosophical framework were forced to confront it in one way or another.

The other way in which Marx elevated the relevance of utopian thinking for his followers concerns one specific aspect of his philosophical framework, namely his theory of social transformation. This theory has many different formulations, offered both by Marx himself and by subsequent scholars. For reasons which I consider in the first chapter of this dissertation, one very viable generalisation of this theory is the following: social transformation is determined primarily by objective or economic factors. Whereas history does not change by itself, but instead by the means of individual and collective actions exercised by individuals on their objective conditions, the scope, direction and effect of these actions are dictated, enabled and limited by the objective environment itself. The failed communist revolutions in the early twentieth century — or rather the failed attempts at revolutions — showed that something was not quite right with this theory. Raymond Geuss describes most succinctly the theoretical problem facing Marxists in the period following the First World War:

If Marx was right about the economy, why were the workers so docile? Could it be that capitalism was more flexible than Marx had anticipated; could it reach to providing at least for the immediate future something rather more ample than declining starvation wages for its slave labourers, the proletariat? Could it, furthermore, be that the power of the status quo resided not simply in its police force, army, and prison system, or even its factories, railways, and merchant ships, but in the power of its control over the human imagination? If that were true, then the realm of consciousness,

culture, and “ideology” could be an important potential arena of political struggle in a sense not clearly envisaged by Marx himself.¹⁵

This latter premise — that consciousness, culture and ideology, as opposed to the economic or objective factors, played a very significant role in social transformations — is a position that most aptly characterises a specific branch of Marxism that was first devised at the Institute for Social Research (Institut für Sozialforschung) in Frankfurt in the 1920s.¹⁶ The members of the Institute rejected parts of Marx’s theory of social change, positing that it did not adequately account for the potential of bourgeois ideology to co-opt and control the ideas and actions of those with clashing objective interests, namely the proletariat. In making the assertion, that certain ideas, rather than objects or matter, were preventing workers from acting, the Frankfurt scholars opened up a more general question concerning the role of ideas, thought and thinking in social transformations. As a type of thinking, utopian thinking also emerged as a factor that could influence social change. In a way, utopian thinking was a ready-made option, offered by Marx himself when he supplied some vivid and memorable comments on what a communist society could be. But Marx never seriously considered utopian thinking as a viable method of revolutionary theorising. He preempted this consideration by prioritising the economy. This was very different for the later generations of Marxist thinkers. As the economy failed to deliver the desired social changes Marx somehow promised it would, the question of utopian thinking became negotiable.¹⁷

In a radio interview in 1964, two associates of the Institute, Theodor W. Adorno — the leading member of its inner circle — and Ernst Bloch — its prominent outcast — debate this very question. Adorno doubts the possibility of utopian thinking as such, claiming that people have lost ‘the capability to imagine the totality as something

¹⁵ Raymond Geuss, ‘Dialectics and the revolutionary impulse’, in *Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory*, ed. by Fred Rush (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 103-38 (p. 132).

¹⁶ See Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination; A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), pp. 41-85.

¹⁷ The argument of this paragraph has been strongly influenced by the comments I have received from Eva von Redecker.

that could be completely different'.¹⁸ In addition, he endorses 'the commandment not to "depict" utopia or the commandment not to conceive certain utopias in detail'.¹⁹ Bloch counters Adorno on both claims, positing that our capacity to imagine a world radically different from ours has endured, and that if this world cannot be displayed 'in the picture', it can be represented 'in the process of being'.²⁰ Moreover, Bloch underscores a point which reaches beyond these disagreements: utopian thinking should not be eliminated.²¹ There is no clear winner to this debate, not least because the two thinkers share common ground. On numerous occasions in the conversation Bloch agrees with Adorno's arguments against portraying utopias. In turn, Adorno, as the critic of utopian thinking, sometimes sides with its defender, in particular regarding the detrimental loss entailed in the prohibition of depicting utopias. This prohibition, Adorno claims:

hat auch ihr sehr Vertracktes, denn dadurch, daß es uns verboten ist, das Bild zu machen, passiert etwas sehr Schlimmes, nämlich daß man zunächst einmal sich denn unter dem, was da sein soll, je mehr es nur als Negatives gesagt werden kann, um so weniger Bestimmtes mehr vorstellen kann. Dann aber — und das ist wahrscheinlich noch viel beängstigender — tendiert dieses Verbot einer konkreten Aussage über Utopie dazu, das utopische Bewußtsein selber zu diffamieren, und das zu verschlucken, worauf es eigentlich ankäme, nämlich diesen Willen, daß es anders ist.²²

The central issue Adorno sets out concerns the relation between the prohibition of depicting utopias and the will for change. Adorno contends that the absence of a positive image of utopia could defame the utopian consciousness, which would in turn engulf that which really matters, namely the will to change the world. The presence of the will for the world to be different has consequences, presumably, for the actual realization of utopia.

¹⁸ Adorno in Bloch, 'Etwas fehlt...Über die Widersprüche der utopischen Sehnsucht. Ein Rundfunkgespräch mit Theodor W. Adorno, 1964', *Tendenz-Latenz-Utopie*, GA, Additional vol., pp. 350-67 (p. 353).

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 361.

²⁰ Bloch, 'Etwas fehlt', p. 366.

²¹ Ibid., p. 366.

²² Adorno, in Bloch, 'Etwas fehlt', p. 363.

Bloch substantiates this concern and develops it into a fully fledged philosophy in favour of utopian thinking. For the reason why the Soviet communism had turned into something much less desirable than had been initially hoped for was not the presence of its utopian element, but rather its absence. Against today's commonly held idea that Marx's very mention of the phrase of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' facilitated the totalitarian transmutation of the Russian Revolution, Bloch argues that the problem lay in the fact that this phrase was insufficiently worked out.²³ In short, for Bloch, one reason for the failure of communism was not its utopianism but rather a lack of utopianism. Bloch's life-long philosophical project consisted in figuring out the ways in which the utopian current of Critical Theory could most effectively be strengthened.

Within the Frankfurt School, however, Adorno's prohibition of utopian thinking, however, prevailed. This prohibition, which I call 'Utopieverbot', became part and parcel of today's dominant strand of Critical Theory. Although one of its leading figures, the existing director of the Institute in Frankfurt, Axel Honneth, has recently, at least partially, turned against the tide, with his *Die Idee des Sozialismus — Versuch einer Aktualisierung* (2015), the *Utopieverbot* endures: theorists are not to envision what a utopian society looks like. Rahel Jaeggi, another prominent member of the Frankfurt School, firmly maintains this position, and instead defends a different philosophical praxis, namely that of social critique, and, to be more precise, of metacritique. Critique, which was a much employed tool of the first generation of Critical Theorists, is targeted at specific aspects of the existing society. In contrast, metacritique goes beyond this intention, and aims to establish the normative criteria which are then to constitute the practice of critique. It was this turn towards metacritique, also known as the procedural or Kantian turn, which cemented the death of utopian thinking in Critical Theory. Whilst Adorno's preoccupation with the negative and the false represented a step towards the removal of utopian thinking from Critical Theory, the concern with the metacritique and procedures was another step towards this removal. Utopian thinking retains its place in Adorno to the extent that the good and the positive present merely the other sides of the false and the negative. This, however, is not the case in the context of theories of metacritique,

²³ Bloch, 'Über ungelöste Aufgaben der sozialistischen Theorie; Ein Gespräch mit Fritz Vilmar 1965', in Bloch, *Tendenz-Latenz-Utopie*, GA, Additional vol., pp. 194-208.

where the concerns of both the good and the false are of secondary importance. Jürgen Habermas, the Frankfurt School figure most responsible for the creation of this 'two-step removal' of utopian thinking from Critical Theory, superseded the question of the right and wrong *norms* with the question of the right and wrong *procedures*, of the procedures for establishing the norms.²⁴ Whereas this question of how norms are to be justified — that is, why we should conform to this and not to that normative principle — did already trouble Habermas's predecessors, including Marx and Adorno, it certainly did not become the focus of their theories. The theories of Marx and the early generations of the Critical Theorists remained strongly normative, that is, containing ideas of the good and the wrong. Habermas, in contrast, disposed of this kind of normativity, positing that no legitimate explanation exist as to how a theorist could extend the legitimacy of his or her personal, subjective norms into universally valid ones. He has suggested, instead, that all a theorist can achieve is to propose certain procedures and conditions on the basis of which individual members of a society could reach an agreement on the universal norms and values guiding a genuinely progressive and just order. In Habermas's own words:

Was sich normativ auszeichnen läßt, sind notwendige, aber allgemeine Bedingungen für eine kommunikative Alltagspraxis und für ein Verfahren der diskursiven Willensbildung, welche die Beteiligten *selbst* in die Lage versetzen könnten, konkrete Möglichkeiten eines besseren und weniger gefährdeten Lebens nach *eigenen* Bedürfnissen und Einsichten aus *eigener* Initiative zu verwirklichen.²⁵

In this articulation of the procedural turn, the emancipation of political theorising from utopian thinking comes is clearly apparent.²⁶ Conceiving and realising the

²⁴ See, e.g., Lois McNay, 'Contemporary Critical Theory' in *The Oxford handbook of political ideologies*, ed. by Michael Freeden et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 138-54.

²⁵ Jürgen Habermas, 'Die Krise des Wohlfahrtsstaates und die Erschöpfung utopischer Energien', in *Die neue Unübersichtlichkeit, Kleine politische Schriften V* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), pp. 141-63 (pp. 161-62).

²⁶ In two respects Habermas too could be interpreted as a utopian thinker, specifically in that his theories of ideal speech situation and communicative rationality do propose a set of *ideal* norms, and moreover, in the sense that these norms are often deemed to be unrealistic and unattainable in practice by failing to take into account unequal intrasubjective power relationships. However, these are not the meanings of utopian thinking I am primarily

concrete possibilities of a just and good society becomes the occupation solely of the participants of society, and not of the philosopher. Seyla Benhabib refers to the socio-epistemological perspective adopted by participants as the standpoint of 'intersubjectivity'.²⁷ This she distinguishes from the perspective of 'transsubjectivity', which reflects the view of the observer who is also in the position to 'analyse and judge social relations'.²⁸ This second perspective has been traditionally taken by social theorists, and it is in this capacity that theorists have been robbed of any right to say anything of content about a good society.

If Habermas, through his procedural turn, established the *Utopieverbot* as a significant structure within Critical Theory, its foundations had been laid down by his mentor, Adorno. The *Utopieverbot* is a much more complex theoretical structure than liberal anti-utopianism. The arguments against utopian thinking espoused by the liberal ideologues are centred above all on its inherent danger, and, in turn, hinge on perceiving it as a form of totalitarianism. References to the totalitarian regimes of Nazism and Stalinism are common in this literature. Adorno's own arguments were equally embedded within and affected by the historical catastrophes of the first half of the twentieth century. Born into a bourgeois Jewish family in 1903, Adorno witnessed and was personally affected by the atrocities of National Socialism. However, Adorno's utopian critique reaches beyond this specific history and the perils which the liberals perceive as being inherent in utopian thinking. The *Utopieverbot*, in contrast, stems from Adorno's view that utopian thinking is impossible. By this I mean that Adorno contended that it was impossible to conceptualise the 'good' society of the future. In the radio conversation with Bloch he put it in the following words: it is impossible to know 'the right' ('das Richtige'),

interested in this dissertation. I am instead concerned with more substantive social ideals, those that concern social life itself, and not those that merely regulate its communicative practices. I perceive the descriptions of an ideal society that consider only its communicative ethics as too barren and abstract to call it utopian thinking. I am also not concerned with understandings of utopian thinking that emphasise the inherently impossible nature of the word utopia, which seems to be the case with those scholars who tend to see Habermas's theories of theories of ideal speech situation and communicative rationality instances of utopian thinking. For an extended definition of how I use the term utopian thinking see pp. 25-27.

²⁷ Seyla Benhabib, *Critique, Norm, and Utopia: A study of the foundations of critical theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 12.

²⁸ Ibid.

that is, the shape and features of a better society.²⁹ The alternative social systems one might conceive at any given moment, in Adorno's view, are simply a variation on the present society, and are thus not radically different from it. In Chapter 2 I explore the reasons and theoretical conditions that sustain Adorno's view. In particular, I argue that it cannot be fully understood in terms of influences exerted on Adorno by Marx and the idea of the Jewish *Bilderverbot* exerted on Adorno, but that it is corroborated by Adorno's conception of time, and by his ideas about the 'culture industry' and 'identity thinking'.

Another prominent aspect of Adorno's thought known as negative dialectics and determinate negation, in turn explains why Adorno's own influence on the dissolution of utopian thinking in Critical Theory, as well as more broadly in Western political thought, has so far not been adequately accounted for. An underlying idea of this theory is that the exclusive task of philosophers is the explication of 'the false', that is the wrong, negative or false features of the existing society — its problems, ills and wrongs, the sufferings and injustices it causes.³⁰ In contrast to the good society, it is possible, Adorno believes, to precisely know the false society.³¹ This way of describing negative dialectics, however, conceals something crucial. As the name of this theoretical tool suggests, Adorno does not understand reality in the binary 'either or' fashion. The ideas of the false and the good society are not, in his view, completely independent of each other, as if each could exist for itself.³² Instead, he claims that the vision of the good, that is of the utopian society, is always already implied in the exposition of the false one, an exposition which is achieved through determinate negation (*bestimmte Negation*).³³ In that determinate negation always entails or points to the vision of a utopian society,

²⁹ Adorno, in Bloch, 'Etwas fehlt', *Tendenz-Latenz-Utopie*, p. 362.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Adorno, in Bloch, 'Etwas fehlt', *Tendenz-Latenz-Utopie*, p. 363.

³² Cf. Rahel Jaeggi, "'Kein Einzelner vermag etwas dagegen'" Adornos *Minima Moralia* als Kritik von Lebensformen', in *Dialektik der Freiheit: Frankfurter Adorno-Konferenz 2003*, ed. by Axel Honneth (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), pp. 115-41. The reading of Adorno that Jaeggi defends in this article is the dominant one in the existing scholarship. One exception is Fabian Freyenhagen, who holds that, apart from in a few instances, Adorno does not possess a prior positive conception of the good society, and proceeds with his critique of the modern capitalist society independent of this standard. See Fabian Freyenhagen, *Adorno's practical philosophy: living less wrongly* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 13-14.

³³ Adorno, in Bloch, 'Etwas fehlt', *Tendenz-Latenz-Utopie*, p. 362.

Adorno's theoretical tool has itself been interpreted as a form of utopian thinking, which I, in this dissertation, refer to as 'negative utopian thinking'. In other words, Adorno's intervention in the field of utopian thinking was transformative. If Adorno's philosophy is recognized itself as utopian thinking, it, clearly cannot simultaneously recognised as playing an instrumental role in its demise.

But can negative thinking, as some thinkers like Rahel Jaeggi contend, in fact be taken as a form of utopian thinking? Is not this negative utopian thinking perhaps misinterpreted and overestimated? Can we simply accept Adorno's contention that a positive projection of a utopian society is subsumed in its negative counterpart? In fact, at some points Adorno argues that a positive projection is not merely subsumed by, but results from, an identification of what a wrong society is. How can this identification of the old at the same time also produce something new? And, furthermore, is not such a subsumed projection fundamentally different from a more explicit, ad hoc one? Is negative utopian thinking not a fundamentally depreciated variety of utopianism?

Bloch contends that the negation of the existing adverse conditions, the explication of the wrongs prevailing in our society, cannot be directly equated with the positive expressions of utopia. More specifically, Bloch argues that:

Im Negativum der objektiven Dialektik (Krankheit, Krise, drohender Untergang in die Barbarei) ist auch zweifellos ein Umgang von Vernichtung, also nicht nur von Nicht, als dem aktiven Treiber, sondern auch von Nichts, als der nur auslöschenden Negation, die an sich, automatisch, noch keineswegs die Negation ihrer Negation in sich hat.³⁴

The utopian society to which Bloch refers here to as the negation of the negative, wrong society ('die Negation ihrer Negation'), does not automatically follow from negation. In his view, 'negativity by itself [...] bears no fruit historically, that is, the negation of the negation is by no means capable of developing itself from its own objectivity alone'.³⁵ Whereas determinate negation does in itself include the utopian

³⁴ Bloch, *Subjekt-Objekt; Erläuterungen zu Hegel*, GA, Vol. 8, pp. 515-16.

³⁵ Ibid.

society as one possibility, it includes another one, the dystopian one. Bloch calls this possibility ‘annihilation’, which can be understood as the total destruction of the existing order, or its descent into the worst imaginable dystopia. In order to prevent such annihilation, and moreover to pave the way for the realisation of the true utopia, Bloch argues that ‘a subjective-active countermove against the annihilation’ is necessary.³⁶ But what does Bloch mean by this ‘subjective-active countermove’? Is this a positive utopian vision, to which Marx, and then Adorno objected? Can Bloch’s rejection of the *Utopieverbote* be understood as a complete reversal of Adorno’s position? As I have already indicated, Bloch and Adorno had common grounds, and the answers to these questions are not simple or one-sided. It is the objective of chapters 4 and 5 to tease out the nuances of Bloch’s critique of the *Utopieverbote*, in both negative and positive ways. Negatively, in the sense of which aspects of the *Utopieverbote* Bloch opposed, and positively, in the sense of which specific forms of utopian thinking Bloch advocated, especially in the context of Critical Theory.

What, however, can be said already at this point regarding Bloch’s conception of utopian thinking is that it remains a form of positive thinking — Bloch’s utopia does include images of how such society looks like. For Bloch utopian thinking, and hoping which is an activity he sees as constitutive of the former, correspond to going *beyond* of that which already is. Although Bloch acknowledges that this act of going beyond can manifest in many different forms, images of possible alternatives to that which seem to present one of their fundamental elements.

Utopia and utopian thinking

A difficulty impeding my project of a clear delineation of the relationship between Critical Theory and utopian thinking is the unclarity inherent in my key operating terms: namely in utopia and utopian thinking, and in the labels Critical Theory and the Frankfurt School. The greatest degree of ambiguity marks the term utopia, a term that has been ill-defined since Thomas More first used it in 1516 in the title of his depiction of a society of a fictional island, in which he elaborated on its religious, political and cultural customs. More employed the word to mean both a ‘good place’

³⁶ Bloch, *Subjekt-Objekt*, pp. 515-16.

(*eutopia*) and a 'non-existing place' (*outopia*). This dual meaning laid ground to the contested question that haunts utopia to this day. The contestation focuses specifically on the nowhere of utopia: is the nowhere simply a result of some specific historical conditions, or is it inherent to the idea of the good society? Could utopia, once historical conditions change, emerge from nowhere to somewhere, or will it always remain confined to the sphere of non-existence? Is a utopian society one that in its immediacy appears unrealisable, or does it fall into the category of "too good to be true", being thus not able to ever be realised? Does utopia not exist because it just happens so, or is there something about its nature that prevents its realisation?

The term utopia accrued additional meanings as More's neologism filtered through into spoken language and was used more widely. Whereas in More's title the word utopia is the name of an island — that is, it designates one concrete object — in the first half of the seventeenth century the concreteness of this island was abstracted from, and utopia evolved into a more general concept. One of the first lexicographically documented meanings of the word utopia as a concept, instead of as a name, is found in a French-English dictionary compiled by Randle Cotgrave (1611), who recorded utopia as the noun 'Vtopie' and defined it as 'an imaginerie place, or countrey'.³⁷ But by the late sixteenth century, utopia did not only mean an imagined place, a place beyond this world, but rather came to indicate a work of fiction analogous to More's. That is, the word utopia by then corresponded to a specific literary genre — utopian fiction. The defining aspect of this genre at that time was the depiction of an ideal commonwealth, claimed by a narrator to exist in an unknown location, and which is then discovered by an European explorer.³⁸ In German encyclopaedias of the early twentieth century, the works of fiction most frequently classified as utopian, besides More's book, include Campanella's *The City of the Sun* (1602), Cabet's *Voyage to Icaria* (1840), Morelly's *Code of Nature* (1755), Harrington's *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656) and Mercier's *The Year 2440* (1771).³⁹ Mercier's work marks another shift in the meaning of utopia, which

³⁷ Hölscher, 'Utopie', p. 7.

³⁸ See Vita Fortunati, 'Utopia as a Literary Genre', in *Dictionary of Literary Utopias*, ed. by Vita Fortunati and Raymond Trousson (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2000), pp. 634-43.

³⁹ Hölscher, 'Utopie', pp. 15-16.

Reinhart Koselleck famously labelled as ‘the temporalisation of utopia’.⁴⁰ Utopia by and large stopped referring to a perfect state of affairs that was supposed to exist already somewhere in the present, as on More’s fictional island, and instead began to exemplify the conception of a perfected arrangement of society, to emerge at some point in the future, as in Mercier’s Paris of the year 2440. The transplantation of utopia from space to time is significant as it facilitated the use of this word in the realm of politics. Utopia was now used above all in two senses. One usage, corresponding to the term’s more common usage today, prioritises the aspect of utopia as an unrealisable or an impossible society. As such, utopia has a strong pejorative undertone and has become widely used as a more general expression of disparagement, indicating one’s hostility to someone else’s political views.⁴¹ Records of this meaning of utopia exist since the time of the English Civil War in the 1640s, when it was often employed to describe any constitution that one party would regard as unacceptable.⁴² More recently, it has been evoked in a Marxist critique of the existing regime, when Slavoj Žižek described late capitalism as utopian.⁴³ The use of utopia as a derogative term is best known in the context of disputes between various socialist movements of the mid-nineteenth century, although this is not indicative of that period of history’s monopoly on utopia. The most notorious of these was Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels’s critique of, above all, Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen, whom they labeled ‘utopian socialists’.⁴⁴ According to Fritz and Frank Manuel, ‘utopian’ for Marx and Engels served simply as an ‘epithet of denigration to be splashed onto any theoretical opponent’.⁴⁵ Martin Buber, similarly, remarked that it presented them with ‘the last and most pointed shaft’ employed in ‘the internal political action’ to be waged ‘against the other so-called — or self-

⁴⁰ Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 85.

⁴¹ For the meaning of the term utopia see ‘Definition of *utopian* in English’, *Oxford Dictionaries*, <<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/english>> [Accessed 8 September 2016] Although its synonyms include some terms that are coloured neutrally or even positively (e.g. ‘heavenly’, ‘perfect’, ‘progressive’), all quoted example sentences use the word utopian in a clearly negative sense of ‘impossible’ (e.g. ‘These books are an indictment of uncompromising, fanatical, and utopian ideology’).

⁴² Hölscher, ‘Utopie’, pp. 18-19.

⁴³ See, e.g., Slavoj Žižek, *Living in End Times* (London: Verso, 2010).

⁴⁴ Marx and Engels, *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei*, MEW, Vol. 4, pp. 459-93 (pp. 489-92).

⁴⁵ Fritz P. Manuel and Frank E. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979), p. 698; Martin Buber, *Paths in Utopia* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), p. 11.

styled — communist movements'.⁴⁶ These political movements have also been referred to as utopian in the other sense in which the word utopia is used in the political discourse, which is one that emphasises the side of utopia as a good society of the future. In this sense, the term utopian was first employed by Louis Reybaud in his 1864 study entitled *Études sur les réformateurs contemporains ou socialistes modernes* in which he identified as utopian not the figures of contemporary socialism and communism but their intellectual forerunners, who included, in addition to the More and Plato, a list of social movements, mostly of Judeo-Christian roots. But very soon the theories and practical undertakings of the contemporary socialists and communists themselves became known as utopian.⁴⁷ In this other sense of its usage in political discourse, utopia thus gained another substantial meaning, one which bears little resemblance to utopia as a category of literary composition to be distinguished from epic, novel, poem, etc.; as well as to utopia simply as an unrealisable world. This is the meaning of utopia associated with a socio-political manifesto. This meaning of utopia as a vision to be pursued, a projection to be envisaged, a goal to be chased, an idea to be engendered with a political intention, is the meaning of utopia I employ in this dissertation.

Whereas this meaning presents only one possible and existing meaning of the concept of utopia, it is the one that is most relevant to my pursuit of examining the role of utopian thinking in theorising aimed at desirable social change. The pejorative employment of the term is irrelevant here, since it preempts this pursuit by failing to say whether and what kind of utopian thinking is good, but implies from the outset that it is useless. In contrast, one central idea of the conception of utopia I am interested in here is the idea that utopia has a transformative function, that is it does play a role in social change. What role it plays specifically is a question I address in this dissertation, but this question can only be addressed when the potential for this role exists. One presumption behind dismissing the existence of this potential is that utopia is the place that is inherently unrealisable. By contrast, the meaning of utopia I employ here renders utopia as a possibility to be realised. No matter how highly unlikely this possibility might appear in the present, the key is that utopia represents a possible world. Critical Theorists viewed the alternative to

⁴⁶ Buber, pp. 11-12.

⁴⁷ Hölscher, 'Utopie', pp. 24-25.

capitalism as a real possibility. Referring to Bloch in particular, Wayne Hudson notes that in his view ‘utopia was not “no place”’.⁴⁸ In fact, a different concept than that of utopia would have been more appropriate. For instance, Rainer E. Zimmermann has suggested ‘we should actually speak of *metopia* rather than utopia when visualizing something that *is not yet* but that *could be* (because it is possible)’.⁴⁹ In contrast to the prefix *ou* which ‘qualifies an absolute form of negation’ that of *me* negates only conditionally. By using a less ambiguous term than that of utopia we would certainly ward off some unnecessary misunderstandings. Yet the use of neologisms, as readers of Bloch would probably attest to, has its own disadvantages. I thus stick to that of utopia but insist on being read in a specific sense, in which the transformative function and a possibility of realisation are constitutive.

By utopian thinking I mean conceptual representations or expressions of utopia in the sense defined above. That is, I focus solely on the conceptual or the discursive as the field in which visions of utopia are expressed. By narrowing down utopian thinking to conceptual expressions I exclude art, both visual and performative, as domains of representing utopia. In the first instance this focus might indeed be deemed unsound, not least because of the distinct interest Critical Theorists had in art and aesthetics, and particularly in their critical and utopian functions. In fact Critical Theorists themselves substantially inflated the overlap between art and utopian thinking, by seeing art, rather than concepts, as more suited to the task of expressing utopia.⁵⁰ A reason for this better suitability of art was its supposed greater independence from existing material conditions. As Herbert Marcuse put it: ‘by virtue of its aesthetic form, art is largely autonomous *vis-a-vis* the given social relations. In its autonomy art both protests these relations, and at the same time transcends them. Thereby art subverts the dominant consciousness, the ordinary experience’.⁵¹ Adorno and Bloch furthermore considered that art, especially music,

⁴⁸ Wayne Hudson, ‘Bloch and a Philosophy of the Proterior’, in *Privatization of Hope; Ernst Bloch and the Future of Utopia*, ed. by Peter Thompson and Slavoj Žižek (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), pp. 21-37 (p. 26).

⁴⁹ Rainer E. Zimmermann, ‘Transforming Utopian into Metopian Systems: Bloch’s Principle of Hope Revisited’, in *Privatization of Hope*, ed. by Thompson and Žižek, pp. 246-68 (p. 248).

⁵⁰ See, e.g., their writings on aesthetics: Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS, Vol. 7; Bloch, *Prinzip Hoffnung*, GA, Vol. 5, pp. 929-81; Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1977).

⁵¹ Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, p. ix.

can express utopia more fully and more truthfully.⁵² This historical relegation of utopian thinking to the arts, however, does not and should not prevent us from examining the Critical Theorists' views on utopian thinking purely as a conceptual enterprise. There are at least three reasons why the focus on conceptual language is valuable. First, most of the available literature on the relation between Critical Theory and utopian thinking in fact considers the latter primarily in the form of art.⁵³ Second, my focus on utopian thinking in the form of concepts will in turn complement this literature by explaining why Critical Theorists shied away from conceptual utopian thinking. The main reason, however, for considering only conceptual expressions of utopia is that these are immanent to the project of Critical Theory. As theory, Critical Theory is nothing but a conceptual project, and if Critical Theorists are themselves to employ any form of utopian thinking it needs to be its conceptual form. In this sense I follow Ruth Levitas, who considers utopian thinking as a method, that is, as a tool that lies at the disposal of theoreticians.⁵⁴ But whereas Levitas focuses on the field of sociology, the context of my investigation is that of Critical Theory. As a theoretical tool I thus distinguish utopian thinking from something that could be called utopian consciousness, desire or aspirations, notions that are ingrained deeply in the core of Critical Theory. In that the objective of Critical Theorists is the realisation of a utopian society, this utopian desire is inherent to their project. The question of just how much the Critical Theorists were committed to this objective, and how radical this utopian aspiration was, are questions, that can, of course, be legitimately posited. They do not, however, present the focus of my study here. The potentially more ambiguous question of my study

⁵² For Adorno see Simon Jarvis, *Adorno: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 90-147; for Bloch see Ivan Boldyrev, *Ernst Bloch and his Contemporaries: Locating Utopian Messianism* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), pp. 10-11

⁵³ E.g. Benjamin M. Korstvedt, *Listening for Utopia in Ernst Bloch's Musical Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Max Paddison, *Adorno Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Tom Huhn and Lambert Zuidervaat (eds.), *The Semblance of Subjectivity. Adorno's Aesthetic Theory* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997); Richard Howells, *A Critical Theory of Creativity: Utopia, Aesthetics, Atheism and Design* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

⁵⁴ Levitas, *Utopia as Method*. In considering utopian thinking as a tool or means of Critical Theory I further follow Maeve Cooke's account of 'means' in *Re-Presenting the Good Society* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 2006). Cooke contends that since the conceptual project of Critical Theory is not sought for its own sake but for the sake of achieving a superior perceptions and materialisation of society in which it is supposed to results, this conceptual project and its various conceptual practices cannot be goods in themselves but means (p. 13).

concerns utopian thinking, which I consider to represent the expressions, manifestations or materialisations of this utopian desire. As I have already indicated, by a crudely differentiating between certain areas of art and concepts, there exist multiple media or forms of these expressions. The proposal of a very strict definition of the utopian thinking I am interested in exploring in the thought of Critical Theorists can be methodologically detrimental. However, some characteristics of my conception of utopian thinking, other than that it is mediated by concepts, can be specified at the outset. As already implied when I posited utopian thinking as a method of philosophy, I focus on those visions of a utopian society that are articulated in what could be called philosophical and theoretical language. This language cannot, of course, be strictly differentiated from the literary one, and, as Bloch himself asserted in the case of utopian thinking in particular, the two are likely to collapse into one another. Yet, the form of utopian thinking I am interested in is specifically the one which cannot quite be equated with literature. Lastly, the form of utopian thinking in my usage of the term is positive or affirmative. It coincides with what Adorno refers to as 'identity thinking' ('das Identitätsdenken'), which is a form of conceptual language in which the subject is *identified* or equated with its predicate or the object.⁵⁵ Mathematical equations are the simplest example of identity thinking — through the use of an identity sign an equation equates what is on its left side with what is on its right one. This identification does not necessarily have to employ the verb 'to be', yet positing what something 'is' is the prototypical form of utopian thinking. In Adorno's own thought identity thinking has a strong negative connotation, which I do not take on. I merely refer to this notion in a descriptive sense. The last aspect of my conception of utopian thinking concerns the degree of concreteness, specificity or detailedness of utopian outlines. Does a description of utopian society as a 'free society' counts as utopian thinking, or does utopian thinking necessitate the elaboration of the conditions, features and institutions of this free society are elaborated on? Whereas in my usage of the term I allow for utopian thinking to be either abstract or specific, I return to and elaborate the significance of this distinction.

⁵⁵ Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, GS, Vol. 6, p. 152.

Critical Theory

The term ‘critical theory’, just at that of utopia, is unstable and contested, and entails a wide range of meanings. In its most narrow usage, often indicated by capitalising the initials, ‘Critical Theory’ refers to the German tradition of interdisciplinary social theory, inaugurated in Frankfurt in the 1930s, and carried forward today in Germany by such thinkers as Jürgen Habermas, Axel Honneth, and Rahel Jaeggi and in the United States by theorists such as Thomas McCarthy, Nancy Fraser, and Seyla Benhabib. In a more capacious usage, often recognised by its non-capitalized initials, ‘critical theory’ refers to any politically inflected form of cultural, social, or political theory that has critical, progressive, or emancipatory aims. Understood in this way, critical theory encompasses much if not all of the work that is done under the banner of feminist theory, queer theory and postcolonial theory. A third distinct but related broader usage of the term refers to the body of theory mobilised in literary and cultural studies, often simply known just as ‘theory’. Here ‘critical theory’ refers mainly to the French intellectual traditions spanning from poststructuralism to psychoanalysis, and includes thinkers such as Michael Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, and Jacques Lacan.

In my usage of the term I mean, above all, ‘critical theory’ in its most narrow sense, that is as Critical Theory. Furthermore, in my considerations I do not cover Critical Theory in its entire historical range, but roughly over the interwar and early postwar era, between the early 1930s and late 1960s. I thereby consider the representatives of Critical Theory who are commonly labelled as its first generation. Thus, when I say that I am investigating the role of utopian thinking from the perspective of Critical Theory, I have in mind the perspective of the members of this German tradition of interdisciplinary social theory, which is also known under the term ‘the Frankfurt School’. Sometimes these two are merged into a third — ‘the critical theory of the Frankfurt School’. The three are more or less synonymous and I will stick to using only that of Critical Theory.⁵⁶ This choice also has to do with the

⁵⁶ From a historical perspective there exist substantial differences in the work of the Institute. In the first decade of its functioning from 1923 onwards, during which the Institute was directed above all by Grossman, Grüneberg and Pollock, economics and empirical research presented its two focal points. This focus gradually shifted towards more philosophical and abstract questions when Horkheimer assumed the directorship in 1930

fact that my thesis features Ernst Bloch who is not usually counted amongst the representatives of the Frankfurt School. Whereas this name was first applied to this group of German-Jewish intellectuals by their commentators, pointing to their common institutional roots, that of the 'Institut für Sozialforschung' in Frankfurt, the Critical Theorists referred to their own theoretical project as Critical Theory, after its leading figure Max Horkheimer, originally employed this term in 1937 in his article entitled 'Traditionelle und kritische Theorie'. In this article Horkheimer provides the first explicit definition of this body of theory, including in terms of its aim as a practical one, which he explicated even more succinctly in a later article as 'man's emancipation from slavery'.⁵⁷ By slavery Horkheimer refers to the social relations prevailing under the then existing capitalist system. For theory to aim at 'emancipation from slavery' thus means thus nothing but to contribute to a liberation of society from its existing repression, to transform an existing society into a radically better one, into what Horkheimer calls 'the community of free people' ('die Gemeinschaft freier Menschen'), or what I call their utopian society.⁵⁸ This vision of a utopian society is consonant with Marx's own, namely as a society beyond exploitation and alienation, and free of class oppression. By positing this practical aim of facilitating the attainment of such utopian society as the ultimate objective of a theoretical pursuit, Horkheimer breached the traditional divide separating the activities of theory and practice and converted Critical Theory into a form of practice itself. In this sense, Critical Theory overlaps with an earlier revision of theory, namely that made by Karl Marx in his eleventh thesis on Feuerbach in 1845. In this text Marx inaugurated his type of theory or philosophy — the foundation of numerous theoretical projects known today under the label of Marxism — as one that aims at a transformation of the world, and opposed to the hitherto existing philosophy which, in Marx's view, aimed only at an explanation of the world.⁵⁹ The name of Marx was, besides G. W. F. Hegel, Sigmund Freud, Georg Lukács and Max Weber, acknowledged by the Critical Theorists themselves as the

and when Adorno became its more active and respected member towards the end of 1930s. The name Critical Theory tends to be associated more closely with this later period, and less so with the inaugural decade of the Institute.

⁵⁷ Max Horkheimer, 'Traditionelle und kritische Theorie' in *Kritische Theorie* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fisher Verlag, 1968), pp. 521-84 (p. 578).

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 550.

⁵⁹ Marx, 'Thesen über Feuerbach', MEW, Vol. 3, p. 5.

thinker who shaped their own ideas most substantially.⁶⁰ In fact, Critical Theory itself can be best understood itself as a revision of Marx's thought in the light of new historical developments. Marx's ideas did not simply influence those of Critical Theorists: they presented the very basis of Critical Theory's project. Critical Theory is thus often classified as a current of Marxism, more specifically as a representative current of Western Marxism, a term coined by Maurice Merleau-Ponty to designate those versions of Marxism which emerged in Western Europe, primarily in Germany, France and Italy, but in the postwar period also in Yugoslavia, as an alternative to the 'Eastern', i.e. Soviet, Marxism.⁶¹ In the early twentieth century, this Soviet Marxism established itself as the dominant variety of Marxism, i.e. Orthodox Marxism, and was heavily influenced by Friedrich Engels and Karl Kautsky's interpretation of primarily those works by Marx in which his deterministic and materialistic side is accentuated, i.e. the 'mature' Marx. Western Marxism, by contrast, gives priority to early Marx, and thus favouring the subjective and dialectical elements of Marx's theory. These latter dimensions of Marx received the hitherto clearest articulation and further elaboration in Georg Lukács's *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* and Karl Korsch's *Marxismus und Philosophie* two texts which laid the foundations, in the early 1920s, for the interpretation of Marx contained in Critical Theory. By the early 1930s, however, in addition to the theoretical inadequacies of the Soviet Marxism, its practical defects also crystallised. Although various communist and socialist sympathisers, from the aftermath of the Bolsheviks's seizure of power in 1917 onwards, became sceptical of the Soviet Union as offering a real progressive alternative to capitalism, it was not until the 1930s, when the Moscow purges became publicly known that its flaws were recognised as definite, including in the eyes of the Critical Theorists.⁶² Critical Theorists thus constructed their own theoretical project not only as an alternative to the Soviet Marxism but as a criticism of it, which partially explains why they refrained from describing themselves as Marxists, in any sense of the word. The specific playing down of their debts to Marxism, the reasons for which can also be found elsewhere

⁶⁰ See Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, pp. 42-43.

⁶¹ See, e.g., Douglas Kellner, 'Western Marxism', in *Modern Social Theory: An Introduction*, ed. by Austin Harrington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 154-174; Russell Jacoby, *Dialectic of Defeat: contours of Western Marxism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London: Verso Editions, 1976).

⁶² See Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 20.

— for example in the fact that, in their exile prior to and during the Second World War, the Critical Theorists were dependent on the support of American institutions — constitutes the more general toning down of the political language employed by the Critical Theorists. Since conceptualisations of a utopian society are clearly highly political, a reason for Critical Theorists' apparent apprehensiveness to supply them might thus also be found in these very pragmatic considerations. Thus, whereas the ensuing chapters seek to reconstruct the arguments of Critical Theorists against utopian thinking that are internal to their body of theory, these arguments need to be seen in their historical context, which I thus also appropriately highlight.

A new perspective on contemporary Critical Theory

The broad objective of my dissertation is twofold: first, to delineate and second to critically assess the historical relationship between Critical Theory and utopian thinking. I proceed by considering the relevant ideas of the forerunner of this intellectual tradition, Marx, who was responsible for creating a confusion regarding the place of utopian thinking in this tradition. That Marx built the dimension of utopian thinking into the very core of Critical Theory makes the examination of how the place of this dimension was later contested a salient reason for such a study in the first place. Following my consideration of Marx, I examine how Adorno and Bloch dealt with the ambiguities instituted by their predecessor. The specific questions I address regard the possibilities and functions of utopian thinking in social change. Whereas these questions could, in principle, be posed in relation to any conceptual project striving for progressive social change, I examine it only within the boundaries of the conceptual project which has in fact defined itself in terms of facilitating radical social change. This focus on Critical Theory enables me, besides offering a more nuanced understanding of the conceptual histories of utopian thinking and of Critical Theory, to contribute to an immanent diagnosis of Critical Theory. By reconstructing the underlying reasoning of the arguments advanced by Adorno against utopian thinking, and the marginalised pro-utopian ideas of Bloch, I provide a new angle on one of the commonly accepted, sympathetic conceptions of Critical Theory. In addition, through the reconstruction of these reasons, I directly challenge the implicit adherence to the *Utopieverbot* by

contemporary Critical Theorists. I suggest that, perhaps, an unwarranted and potentially detrimental lacuna presides over the practice of Critical Theory today.

My thesis contributes to the field of the intellectual history of utopian thinking by considering the latter in a very specific, political sense, as a theoretical tool of contributing to desirable social change. The existing field of literature of the intellectual history of utopian thinking, which comprises of seminal texts such as Manuel and Manuel's *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (1979) and more recent ones like Gregory Claeys's *Searching for Utopia: the History of an Idea* (2011), tends to focus more on utopian thinking understood as a literary genre rather than as a political project. In fact, this literature often does not even distinguish between the two distinct meanings, but merges them. This practice has probably helped to strengthen the prevailing negative connotations of utopian thinking in its political sense: understanding utopia primarily as a kind of an artistic activity diminishes its direct relevance and immediate use for political change from the outset. Another typical characteristic of the existing literature in this field is its form, that of historical overviews, and moreover of rather predictable overviews. As an influential utopian scholar Krishan Kumar notes, these overviews construct a fixed storyline in the course of which 'one is bounced through the ancients [...] served up with More, Campanella and Bacon [...] and finished off with the nineteenth-century socialists: often with a coda which proclaims or laments the death of utopia in our own century'.⁶³ While these overviews leave a reader with a strong sense of the depth and extent of the European social imagination, their intention is primarily descriptive — providing descriptions and interpretations of various past instantiations of utopian thinking. As an alternative, my thesis aims to make an argument about utopian thinking more generally. Whereas I do offer close readings of the individual engagements with utopian thinking, I do so, ultimately, in order to inform how, as well as why, the discrepancies among them affected and changed our conception of utopian thinking as such. The death of utopia in the twentieth century is one such example of a transformation that the conception of utopian thinking experienced, and while often acknowledged, very limited scholarship actually takes it as its central subject. In his book *The End of Utopia*, Russell Jacoby illustrates this

⁶³ Krishan Kumar, *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), p. vii.

phenomenon, making a case that utopian thinking has indeed been marginalised in contemporary politics.⁶⁴ Russell, however, does not supply an explanation as to how and why it has been marginalised, which he does consider elsewhere, in his contribution to the volume *Temporalisation of Utopia*.⁶⁵ Russell's account is typical of the sole explanation that has been advanced so far, namely that the main culprits of anti-utopianism are the libertarian thinkers of the mid-twentieth century, such as Hayek, Popper and Berlin, who associated utopian thinking with totalitarianism.⁶⁶ This stance has also been taken recently, Ruth Levitas in her *Utopia as Method*, where she refers, in addition to Hayek-Popper-Berlin triumvirate, to Judith Shklar, Jacob Talmon and Norman Cohn, as well as to some more contemporary defenders of anti-utopianism like John Gray.⁶⁷ Apart from this liberal discourse the existing literature does not refer to any other influence which might have facilitated the death of utopia. In my thesis I point to another strand of anti-utopianism which, despite arising at around the same time as the right-wing one, emerged from a competing political domain, the radical left, and more specifically from one of its constituent discourses, that of Critical Theory. In my thesis, I not only point to the anti-utopian current in Critical Theory as an additional determinant of the existing status of utopian thinking, one which has thus far been neglected, but also comprehensively examine it by spelling out its conceptual rationale and its historical conditioning.

My thesis also contributes to scholarship on Critical Theory. Some of the groundwork for what is today the most common conception of Critical Theory was laid by its original intellectual historian, Martin Jay in his book *The Dialectical Imagination* (1973). This conception was later complemented by the English translation of Rolf Wiggershaus's *The Frankfurt School* (1995) and reinforced by, among others, David Held's *Introduction to Critical Theory* (1990), David C. Hoy and Thomas McCarthy's *Critical Theory* (1994), and John Abromeit's *Max Horkheimer*

⁶⁴ Russell Jacoby, *The End of Utopia: politics and culture in an age of apathy* (New York : Basic Books, 1999).

⁶⁵ Jacoby, 'Karl Popper, Isaiah Berlin, and the Anti-Utopian Refugees', in *The Temptation of Hope*, ed. by Berghahn.

⁶⁶ See also Laurence Davies, 'Isaiah Berlin, William Morris, and the Politics of Utopia', in *The Philosophy of Utopia*, ed. by Barbara Goodwin (London: Frank Cass, 2001), pp. 56-86.

⁶⁷ Levitas, *Utopia as Method*, p. 7.

and the Foundations of the Frankfurt School (2011).⁶⁸ These introductory texts represent, together with the more heavily theoretical ones — above all Raymond Geuss's *The Idea of a Critical Theory* (1981) and Seyla Benhabib's *Critique, Norm, and Utopia* (1986) —, the established scholarship of Critical Theory.⁶⁹ The conception of Critical Theory favoured by these scholars is one that takes the *Dialektik der Aufklärung* as its canonical text and its authors, Adorno and Horkheimer, as its canonical representatives. Whereas Adorno's further prominence stems from his authorship of *Negative Dialektik*, the other text that is also often quoted as a seminal work of Critical Theory, Horkheimer's existing degree of recognition is related to his status as the longest-serving director of the Institute, and as the one who lent this tradition its name of Critical Theory. The three other scholars who are most repeatedly associated with Critical Theory are Benjamin, Marcuse and Habermas. Whereas the scholarship mentioned does indeed refer to a much wider range of names as belonging to this tradition (besides to Bloch, also to Carl Grünberg, Friedrich Pollock, Henryk Grossman, Franz Neumann, Siegfried Kracauer, Erich Fromm, and others), it never attends to their thought with a comparable degree of scrutiny. With some exceptions such as Gerhard Richter's *Thought-images: Frankfurt School Writers' Reflections from Damaged Life* (2007), none of the better known works on the Frankfurt School discusses Bloch's ideas in any amount of detail.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School: Its history, theories, and political significance*, trans. by Michael Robertson (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995); David Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990); David C. Hoy and Thomas McCarthy, *Critical Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994); John Abromeit, *Max Horkheimer and the Foundations of the Frankfurt School* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁶⁹ Raymond Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory: Habermas and the Frankfurt school* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Seyla Benhabib, *Critique, Norm, and Utopia*. To this selection three other more historical and biographical works could be added: Thomas Wheatland, *The Frankfurt School in Exile* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); Jack Jacobs, *The Frankfurt School, Jewish Lives, and Antisemitism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Stuart Jeffries, *The Grand Hotel Abyss: The lives of the Frankfurt School* (London; New York: Verso, 2016).

⁷⁰ The following works do not even mention Bloch's name: Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory*; Hoy and McCarthy, *Critical Theory*; Wheatland, *The Frankfurt School in Exile* and Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory*. Some other works, including Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*; Jay, *Dialectical Imagination*; Jeffries, *The Grand Hotel Abyss*; Abromeit, *Max Horkheimer and the Foundations of the Frankfurt School*; Jacobs, *The Frankfurt School, Jewish Lives, and Antisemitism* do mention his name, but in a fleeting fashion, often only in the footnotes.

In contrast to this literature my thesis considers Bloch as one central figure of Critical Theory. A reason why Bloch has so far not been considered as part of the core of Critical Theory does not have to do so much with irreconcilable differences between his philosophy and that of the others, but rather more with the lack of physical proximity to the Institute and its members: besides the fact that he was never a member of the Institute, Bloch remained relatively removed from it, both during the interwar exile in the United States and after his return to the postwar Germany.⁷¹ The existing literature is, however, inconsistent in applying this reason as a criterion for determining who does and who does not belong to the core of Critical Theory. In the core of Critical Theory it includes Benjamin who was never a formal member of the Institute, and moreover, while he might not have led a life isolated in the same fashion as Bloch, he was nevertheless, due to his premature death in 1940, also removed from the rest of the Critical Theorists. Benjamin's ultimate inclusion is thus justified alternatively, namely on the basis of his involved relationships with the Institute's members, especially with Adorno. But this very same observation can be made for also Bloch. Correspondences between Bloch and several members of this group show that Bloch's work unfolded in a constant dialogue with that produced by others. Bloch, for his part, wrote his early expressionistic work, *Spuren* (1930), in the context of frequent discussions with Benjamin, who was then writing *Einbahnstraße* (1928), also a work influenced by Expressionism. The latter Bloch subsequently reviewed for Institute's journal, *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, along with his other reviews for this publication. Remarks made by Adorno and Benjamin also point to substantial interlinkages between their and Bloch's thought: as early as 1919 Benjamin observed that for all the reservations he had with respect to Bloch's work, *Geist der Utopie* is 'the only book, which I can compare myself with'.⁷² The significance of this work is also acknowledged by Adorno many years later by noting that he does not believe he has

⁷¹ I have identified two works whose authors employ alternative criteria and subsequently consider Bloch as belonging to the core of Critical Theory. Besides in Gerhard Richter, *Thought-images: Frankfurt School Writers' Reflections from Damaged Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), Bloch is recognised as the key figure in Eduardo Mendieta, *The Frankfurt School on Religion: Key Writings by the Major Thinkers* (New York; London: Routledge, 2005).

⁷² Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Briefe / Walter Benjamin*, Vol. 2, 1919-1924, ed by. Christoph Gödde und Henri Lonitz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996), p. 46. For a brief description of the degree of mutual influence between Benjamin and Bloch, see Vincent Geoghegan, *Ernst Bloch* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 16-18.

ever written anything without commemorating the motifs of *Geist der Utopie*.⁷³ As another case in point, we may recall another letter by Adorno from 1937 in which he expresses his desire to officially involve Bloch with the Institute.⁷⁴ These comments invite for a closer and more balanced study of the mediations between Bloch, Adorno as well as Benjamin's writings than has been supplied so far.

By considering Bloch's utopian thought in the context of Critical Theory I also contribute to making his thought generally more accessible and thus recognised. Besides the very resolute marginalisation of Bloch within solely the scholarship on Critical Theory, Bloch also represents a marginal figure in scholarship considered more broadly, like social theory or German philosophy. This is evident from the deficiency in both the relevant primary and secondary literature. Bloch's *Gesamtausgabe* has not yet been translated into English. For the time being, however, the difference in accessibility of their works is substantial.⁷⁵ The quantity and quality of Adorno scholarship is incomparable to that on Bloch.⁷⁶ In total only

⁷³ Adorno, 'Henkel, Krug und Frühe Erfahrung', *Noten zur Literatur*, GS, Vol. 11, pp. 556-66 (p. 557).

⁷⁴ Adorno, 'Adorno an Bloch, 2 Oktober 1937', in *Briefe und Briefwechsel / Theodor W. Adorno*, Vol. 5; *Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer: Briefwechsel*, Vol. 1, 1927-1937, ed. by Christoph Gödde and Henri Lonitz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), p. 537 (pp. 536-39).

⁷⁵ Only six of Bloch's manuscripts have been translated, compared to about thirty of Adorno's, some of which are furthermore included in one of the four existing Adorno anthologies: *The Adorno Reader*, ed. by Brian O'Connor (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000); *Can One Live after Auschwitz?: A Philosophical Reader*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. by J. M. Bernstein (London: Routledge, 1991); *Essays on Music: Theodor W. Adorno*, ed. by Richard Leppert; trans. by Susan H. Gillespie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). So far there exists only one Bloch anthology, namely *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: selected essays*, ed. by Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 1988).

⁷⁶ There exist six introductions to Adorno's thought. Further to the four classic introductions (Gillian Rose, *The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor W. Adorno* (London: MacMillan, 1982); Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt Institute* (New York: The Free Press, 1977); Jarvis, *Adorno*; and Martin Jay, *Adorno* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984)), three highly accessible ones were published more recently: Brian O'Connor, *Adorno* (London: Routledge, 2013); Gerhard Schweppenhäuser, *Theodor W. Adorno: An Introduction*, trans. by James Rolleston (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); *Theodor Adorno: Key Concepts*, ed. by Deborah Cook (Durham, UK: Acumen, 2008). These introductions are complemented by three biographies of Adorno (Lorenz Jäger, *Adorno: A Political Biography*, trans. by Stewart Spencer (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2004); Stefan Müller-Dooch, *Adorno: A Biography*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005); Detlev Claussen, *Theodor W. Adorno: One Last Genius*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008); and furthermore, by a very extensive list of more

six books that deal solely with Bloch's ideas have been published in English, none of which is either a biography or an introduction aimed at a more general readership.⁷⁷ With the exception of Ivan Boldyrev's *Ernst Bloch and his Contemporaries* (2015), the existing scholarship examines Bloch in the form of self-standing accounts of quite specific aspects of his thought. Whereas a very basic introduction to Bloch, as well as a dictionary of his key concepts, would certainly prove an useful addition to this literature, I consider a comparative study to be an especially effective way of initially familiarising the English speaking audience with Bloch's ideas.⁷⁸ This is not only because his ideas will thereby immediately appear more accessible to those readers who are already familiar with Adorno, but also because of the substantial originality of Bloch's thought. Unlike Adorno, Bloch did not have much trust in the established philosophical traditions and thus did not feel the need to systematically engage with it before proceeding to build his own philosophical system. Bloch instead constructed his system as if from scratch — this is perhaps most evident from the sheer amount of neologisms he introduces — thus making it harder for the readers to grasp and comprehend it. By approaching the study of Bloch's thought in a fundamentally comparative manner, juxtaposing it to the more well researched thinker of a common intellectual heritage and political convictions, I thus introduce Bloch as already embedded in a certain context, thus easing the understanding and elucidating the relevance of his philosophy. In this way my thesis could facilitate placing Bloch not only back on the map of Critical Theory but on that of German intellectual history, overviews of which have so far also left him out.⁷⁹

specialised manuscripts, edited volumes and articles in the established journals on critical theory and philosophy.

⁷⁷ The two more general overviews of Bloch's thought are Wayne Hudson, *The Marxist Philosophy of Ernst Bloch* (London: Macmillan, 1982) and Vincent Geoghegan, *Ernst Bloch*. In addition, Korstvedt, *Listening for Utopia in Ernst Bloch's Musical Philosophy* and Boldyrev, *Ernst Bloch and his Contemporaries* are the two manuscripts looking at specific aspects of Bloch. There are also two edited volumes engaging closely with Bloch: *Not Yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch*, ed. by Jamie Owen Daniel and Tom Moylan (New York and London: Verso, 1997); and *The Privatization of Hope: Ernst Bloch and the Future of Utopia*, ed. by Peter Thompson and Slavoj Žižek (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2013).

⁷⁸ Or a translation of the already compiled dictionary of Bloch's terms in the German language: *Bloch-Wörterbuch: Leitbegriffe der Philosophie Ernst Blochs*, ed. by Beat Dietschy, Doris Zeilinger and Rainer Zimmermann (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2012).

⁷⁹ See, e.g., Andrew Bowie, *Introduction to German Philosophy: From Kant to Habermas* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003).

The core subject of my thesis is rather than the individual field of utopian thinking and Critical Theory, the relationship between the two. Whereas no scholarship has yet inquired into this very same topic, Vincent Geoghegan's monograph *Marxism and Utopianism* is probably the closest study to my own.⁸⁰ This book resembles my dissertation not only in investigating the two traditions in conjunction with each other but also in its approving attitude towards utopian thinking. It is clear that Geoghegan considers that utopian thinking has been unfairly consigned to the margins amongst current left intellectuals, and in turn, attempts to develop an alternative to the authoritarian utopian thinking. A significant difference, however, separates Geoghegan's book from my thesis, which is related to the repertoires of the Marxist thinkers considered. Geoghegan considers solely those thinkers who were either favourable of utopian thinking, and/or possessed a certain positive conception of utopia, whereas I look at both the pro- and anti-utopian current in Marxism. Although Geoghegan does claim that utopian thinking has through its history become detached from Marxism, it is not his objective to illustrate this thesis. In contrast, by including in my examination also the thought of Adorno, my dissertation highlights a major influence on the abandonment of utopia. Another difference between Geoghegan's and my work relates to the treatment of Bloch. Geoghegan does not make sufficiently clear how Bloch's understandings of utopian thinking are relevant to the conceptions of utopia by Marx and Engels, other Marxist thinkers and to the Marxist tradition more generally — which is an objective of my thesis.

Finally, my thesis also intervenes in the field of contemporary Critical Theory. Whereas it investigates the generation of Critical Theorists active up to until 1970s, its findings also prove relevant to the contemporary representatives of this tradition. As I have pointed out above, these thinkers refuse to engage in any kind of affirmative utopian thinking, and instead insist on negation or criticism as their main and only vehicle of theory, often founding their approach directly on Adorno's own emphasis on negativity.⁸¹ This approach has been challenged over the last decade by theorists from other fields, including by Bruno Latour, who in his

⁸⁰ Vincent Geoghegan, *Marxism and Utopianism* (London; New York: Methuen, 1987).

⁸¹ Cf. Jaeggi, 'Kein Einzelner vermag etwas dagegen', in *Dialektik der Freiheit*, ed. by Honneth.

eponymous article enquires whether 'critique has run out of steam'.⁸² Some other scholars, like Nikolas Kompridis, have directed their call for embracing some form of affirmative utopian thinking specifically at the practice of contemporary Critical Theory.⁸³ Kompridis, however, does not tie in his arguments in favour of utopian thinking within the tradition of Critical Theory, that is, he does not explain why it is the task of Critical Theory in particular to restore the forgotten practice of concretely envisioning concretely a better society. Kompridis, moreover, does not provide convincing reasons as to why the negativity of contemporary Critical Theory should indeed be complemented by a more explicit affirmation. By considering Bloch's thought I show why negation on its own is an insufficient tool of Critical Theory, and highlight those forms of utopian thinking which overcome some of the problems and aporias with which it has been traditionally associated, such as its authoritarian inflections and its need to make some presumptions about the essence or telos of human being. Thereby my thesis informs contemporary Critical Theory of a new direction in a more substantiated way than existing scholarship has done so far.

My thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter considers Marx, the following two Adorno, and the final two Bloch. I present Marx's attitudes towards utopian thinking as highly ambivalent, and present the reasons to see him both as a utopian thinker and as a critic of utopian thinking. Marx's views are taken into account not merely because of the great influence that they exerted on Adorno's and Bloch's own views. They are also relevant because their inherently unclear and contradictory nature partly initiated, together with the changed historical circumstances, the later split between Bloch's more pro-utopian position and Adorno's more anti-utopian one. The objections posed by Marx to utopian thinking that I examine in detail are that it is impossible and unnecessary for progressive social change. Chapter 2 examines Adorno's objections to utopian thinking. At first this chapter shows that Adorno indeed instituted the *Utopieverbot*, for which the subsequent sections then offer various explanations. I argue that the rationale for

⁸² Bruno Latour, 'Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern', *Critical Inquiry*, 30 (2004), 225-48.

⁸³ Nikolas Kompridis, 'Disclosing Possibility: The Past and Future of Critical Theory', *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 13:3 (2005), 325-51.

the *Utopieverbot* has so far been poorly understood and confined mainly to the influences of the Jewish *Bilderverbot* and Marx's own thought. I advance three other explanations for Adorno's idea that utopian thinking is impossible, which have to do with his philosophy of history, substantially shaped by Benjamin, and his understanding of the late capitalist society and of the then prevailing form of conceptual language. Chapter 3 offers a critical commentary of the view that is shared by much of the scholarship on Adorno to reads his writings as strongly utopian. One of the readings of Adorno I criticise is that offered by Rahel Jaeggi. By investigating the two other strands of the existing argumentation of why Adorno's negative dialectics is at the same time also a display of a utopian society, I make evident that something fundamental to utopian thinking remains missing within Adorno's approach, and suggest that this lack is related to positive thinking. Chapter 4 serves as an introduction to the centrality of utopian thinking in Bloch's work. By touching on some of the basic concepts of Bloch's philosophy, such as the 'Not-Yet' ('Noch-Nicht'), 'Heimat' and the 'Invariant of Direction' ('Invarianz der Richtung'), this chapter delineates Bloch's rejection of the *Utopieverbot*, as well as his notion of 'concrete utopia' ('konkrete Utopie') that represent one alternative to Adorno's negative one. My final chapter looks more generally at those aspect of Bloch's philosophy which illuminate why in his view utopian thinking is indeed possible, as well as a necessary element of Critical Theory. These aspects are largely ontological. Through a brief illustration of how Bloch radically revised the then existing conception of materialism into one he called 'speculative', the chapter paves a way for an account of 'processual utopian thinking' as another alternative form of utopian thinking as an element of Critical Theory.

The place of utopian thinking in Critical Theory, both in a historical and in a theoretically tenable sense, has so far remained obscured. My thesis clarifies and assesses a set of turns, transformations and revisions that this conceptual practice has undergone within this tradition. I argue that these turns have ultimately resulted in a disappearance of utopian thinking in the context of Critical Theory, and have thereby contributed to the broader discreditation of this practice as a political activity. By considering the ideas of Bloch, in addition, I constructively counter the tendency towards disappearance of utopian thinking, outlining not only the case for its place but also the qualities and form of that place. On the whole, my thesis offers a new perspective on contemporary Critical Theory, and while examining in detail

only this specific intellectual tradition, its findings could prove valuable to other attempts of directing social change through primarily conceptual means.

CHAPTER 1

Marx's two utopian paradoxes

The deployment of the label 'utopian' and its consequences

Marx used the term 'utopian' in a highly idiosyncratic way. As a political activist, most notably as the founding member of the First International Workingmen's Association, Marx applied this label to his opponents only to convey his general disagreement with their politics.⁸⁴ The French visionaries of socialism, Charles Fourier and Henri de Saint-Simon, and the English social reformer Robert Owen were the most frequent targets of those criticisms Marx phrased in terms of utopianism. Marx did not apply this term only to the individual conceptual or practical schemes devised by Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen, as well as their disciples, but also used it interchangeably with their names as such.⁸⁵ Thus, thanks to Marx and Engels, Saint-Simon, Owen and Fourier are today perhaps best known jointly as 'utopian socialists'.⁸⁶ Next to the utopian socialists, Marx designated as utopian some other of his French-speaking adversaries. For example, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, an influential spokesman of the Paris workers' movement of the mid-nineteenth century and a pioneer of anarchism, was also recognised as a representative of 'merely utopianists'.⁸⁷ Moreover, Marx denounced the actions of the Paris proletariat itself as 'utopistische Flausen'.⁸⁸ Similarly, in the context of the simultaneous revolutionary upheavals in Germany, which was then still divided into

⁸⁴ See Buber, p. 11; Gregory Claeys, 'Early Socialism as Intellectual History', *History of European Ideas* (2014), 1-12 (pp. 1-2); Manuel and Manuel, p. 698; Bertell Ollman, 'Marx's Vision of communism a reconstruction', *Journal of Socialist Theory*, 8:1 (2007), 4-41 (p. 7).

⁸⁵ See Marx and Engels, *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei*, pp. 68-72. The term 'utopian socialists' was appropriated and popularised by Engels later in his life, in a 1880 article entitled 'Die Entwicklung des Sozialismus von der Utopie zur Wissenschaft', MEW, Vol. 19, pp. 177-228.

⁸⁶ The term 'utopian socialists' was actually not coined by Marx and Engels, yet it was their use that firmly entrenched it in the register of socialist thought. See Gareth Stedman-Jones, 'Utopian socialism', in *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, ed. by Tom Bottomore et al. (Oxford: Blackwell Reference, 1991), p. 561.

⁸⁷ Marx, *Das Elend der Philosophie*, MEW, Vol. 4, pp. 63-182 (p. 143).

⁸⁸ Marx, 'Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte', MEW, Vol. 8, pp. 115-23 (p. 121).

multiple large and small states, Marx considered an 'a priori' call for 'one united German Republic' as a 'utopian demand'.⁸⁹ Finally, towards the end of his life, in the 1870s, Marx also described as utopian the demands instituted by the German socialists, specifically the Socialist Workers' Party of Germany (Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands, SAPD).⁹⁰

Marx's habit of using the term utopian in this pejorative and very generalising way has obscured his actual views on the activity of utopian thinking. By Marx's actual views I mean his view on the activity of envisaging the ideal future society at the more substantive or theoretical level. The fact that Marx used the term utopian in this way does not by any means need to be reflective of his views of utopian thinking in the sense of the currently established meanings of this phrase, or in the specific sense in which I use it here. Yet Marx's seemingly indiscriminate usage of the term utopian, pitching it against seemingly anyone who, from his point of view, did not grasp communism quite correctly, has not been sufficiently distinguished from the very concrete objections he had against envisaging the future society. In the most extreme case, Marx's use of the term utopian is seen as indistinguishable from what he thought about the functions of utopian thinking. Many misguided conclusions can be derived from conflating these two perspectives. One, represented by Bertell Ollman, among others, has been that Marx in fact did not hold any objections to utopian thinking.⁹¹ The fact that Marx's explicit denunciations of utopian thinking and utopian thinkers were motivated by strategic reasons is supposed to discredit any view of Marx as a critic of utopian thinking. This conclusion, to be sure, misses other possible ways in which Marx could have, and indeed did, express his opposition to utopian thinking.

My focus in this chapter lies not in Marx's rhetorical usage of the term. By this I do not mean to dismiss the possible repercussions this exerted on the later developments of the status of utopian thinking in Critical Theory. I simply want to emphasise that when it comes to Marx and utopia it can be equally important to put

⁸⁹ Marx, 'Programme der radikal-demokratischen Partei und der Linken zu Frankfurt', MEW, Vol. 5, pp. 39-43 (p. 42).

⁹⁰ 'Marx to F. A. Sorge, 19 October 1877', in *The Letters of Karl Marx*, ed. by Saul K. Padover (Prentice Hall: New Jersey, 1979), pp. 319-20.

⁹¹ See Ollman, 'Marx's Vision of communism a reconstruction', p. 8.

the consideration of this usage aside. My objective in this chapter is instead to reconstruct Marx's actual views on the activity of utopian thinking, which I do by looking at some aspects of Marx's theoretical framework. I show that Marx can justifiably be perceived both as a critic and as an advocate of utopian thinking, and moreover as someone who had an underdeveloped view of this topic. I argue that this is the most important view to have if we are to better understand the later developments of the status of utopian thinking in Critical Theory. Rather than judging whether it is the pro- or the anti-utopian tendency that carries greater weight in Marx's thought, the first argument of this chapter is that the critical issue is to recognise the simultaneous presence of both tendencies, as well as the indifferent side of Marx that lies between his pro- and anti-utopianism. I argue that, in part, the question of utopian thinking was for Marx not the most relevant question to consider *comprehensively* and *in detail*. It is crucial to recognise this third side of Marx because it implies that the views he held on this topic should not be regarded to be conclusive and definite as the later Marxist thinkers and scholars have often considered them to be.

My second argument concerns the interplay between these three sides of Marx. To some extent these sides can be neatly separated, which is also reflected in the structure of this chapter: the section on the communist society emphasises Marx's pro-utopianism; the following section, which deals with the impossibility of utopian thinking, unleashes his critical side; and the final section on its irrelevance offers reasons as to why utopian thinking was an unimportant concern of Marx. The separation of the three sides is, however, not completely neat. The three sides sometimes intersect, producing certain paradoxes which, even on a further examination, cannot be entirely resolved. One paradox I investigate concerns Marx's view on the possibility of utopian thinking: in his criticism of the utopian socialists he claimed the future cannot be envisaged, yet in some instances this was precisely what he was doing himself. I argue that the existence of this and one other paradox of the irrelevance of utopian thinking facilitated the closer engagements with this question by the Critical Theorists. In fact, the very existence of these paradoxes in

Marx's thought is the reason why his views on utopian thinking need to be spelled out before we can turn to investigate them in Adorno and Bloch.⁹²

Marx's vision of the communist society

Some of Marx's most memorable statements deal with the content of a communist society:

Dieser Kommunismus ist als vollendeter Naturalismus Humanismus, als vollendeter Humanismus Naturalismus, er ist die *wahrhafte* Auflösung des Widerstreites zwischen dem Menschen mit der Natur und mit dem Menschen, die wahre Auflösung des Streits zwischen Existenz und Wesen, zwischen Vergegenständlichung und Selbstbestätigung, zwischen Freiheit und Notwendigkeit, zwischen Individuum und Gattung. Er ist das aufgelöste Rätsel der Geschichte und weiß sich als diese Lösung.⁹³

The scholarship is, however, united in that Marx did not supply a fully fledged and spelled-out vision of a communist society: he neither followed early Enlightenment utopians such as Locke or Rousseau who derived a specific institutional structure of a society from an account of what they considered the human needs, wants and passions to be; nor did he ponder on the details of the ensuing institutional structure like the utopian socialists had done before him.⁹⁴ For example, questions such as how Marx's favoured social decision-making processes, namely those of direct

⁹² My argument about Marx's influence on the thought of Adorno and Bloch does not primarily concern the direct affinities that exist between their individual viewpoints on utopian thinking. That is, I am not concerned so much with tracing the causal linkages between the specific statements that Marx made regarding utopian thinking, and those of Adorno and Bloch. Rather, I argue that in adopting Marx's general theoretical project as one fundamental of their own approaches, Bloch and Adorno also inherited its problems, ambivalences and inconsistencies, and furthermore, that the utopian paradoxes I discuss in this chapter present two of these problems.

⁹³ Marx, 'Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte aus dem Jahre 1844', MEW, Vol. 40, pp. 465-588 (p. 536).

⁹⁴ Partial exceptions to this view are the positions of Bertell Ollman and Peter Hudis. While agreeing that Marx did not provide a systematic and detailed conception of communism, Ollman and Hudis contend that such a vision can be reconstructed from his overall corpus. They attempt such reconstruction themselves. See Bertell Ollman, 'Marx's Vision of communism, a reconstruction'; Peter Hudis, *Marx's concept of the alternative to capitalism* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2012).

democracy, would actually be set up and run, remain unaddressed in his writings. Or, given his insistence on the international character of the revolution, he never gives us any details on the international character of the post-revolutionary globe. Yet this is not to deny that Marx did not advance a handful of highly significant theoretical principles underlying the idea of a communist society, and moreover, he did allude to various aspects of this society from a more practical perspective, even if often in the form of shorter, sporadic remarks.

Most of Marx's widely known remarks about how he envisaged the communist society originate from his early works, specifically the 1844 'Ökonomisch-philosophischen Manuskripte' (also known as the 'Pariser Manuscripte') and *Die deutsche Ideologie* (1846). Some foundations of the ideas presented there, however, Marx had drafted earlier, in his slightly lesser known notes on James Mill (1844).⁹⁵ As Daniel Brudney notes, in this text Marx 'gives a self-realization account of the human good'.⁹⁶ For in these notes Marx implicitly contends that having certain relationships to other human beings and to the world, as well as engaging in a particular kind of activity, would realise one's human nature. From this, a certain conception of a life that is in accord with human nature, that is, of the good human life, can be derived.⁹⁷

The core of this theory of human nature consists in Marx's concept of 'Gattungswesen' (species-essence; species-being), namely that the essence of human beings is their community, as opposed to the individual self, the self which could, at least hypothetically, exist autonomously to others.⁹⁸ The idea here is not so much that individuals could not live independently of each other in terms of their mere survival, as in living on an isolated island, but rather that the mere notion of the independent self, of my own self, the 'I' of the Cartesian subject, is intertwined and dependent on other human beings to such a degree that it is, as such, bereft of any meaning. The easiest way to grasp this idea is to relate it to the concept of needs,

⁹⁵ Marx, 'Exzerpte aus James Mill: *Éléments d'économie politique*', Marx und Engels Gesamtausgabe (MEGA), IV:2 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1982), pp. 428-72.

⁹⁶ Daniel Brudney, *Marx's Attempt to Leave Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 146.

⁹⁷ For a more detailed account of Marx's conception of human nature see Brudney, pp. 143-91; Andrew Chitty, 'The early Marx on needs', *Radical Philosophy*, 64 (1993), 23-31.

⁹⁸ Marx, 'Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte', p. 515.

which also, in Marx's view, constituted the essence of human beings. Marx argued that more complex needs, like the need for diverse, balanced, aesthetically appealing, high quality nutrition, as opposed to food as such, can only be satisfied by others, by their labour. In that others fulfil my needs which in turn define who I am, these other people too define my 'own' self. Whereas this thought is often misinterpreted as denying the existence of individuals and as giving a categorical precedence to society over individuals, it means, in the first instance, that the self of an individual emerges and exists only in the context of a society; only in an interaction or relation with others. In other words, a Robinson Crusoe type of character is a purely mythical construction.

The other important idea that Marx introduces in his early works relates to the type of activity that would allow for one's self-realisation. Marx calls this activity 'Gattungsakt' (species-activity) and means the activity characteristic of a species-essence.⁹⁹ This activity is generally better known under the name of non-alienated labour and is used to designate the type of work that would prevail in a communist society. It is also known as the activity that would prevail in 'the realm of freedom', as opposed to those occurring in 'the realm of necessity', phrases that Marx introduces in *Das Kapital* to distinguish between communist and capitalist societies.¹⁰⁰ Although connected to each other, there are three key aspects to understanding what non-alienated labour is. First, through this activity human beings 'relate to themselves as the present, living species', which means producing things for other human beings and enjoying the products of other human beings.¹⁰¹ Second, the activity of non-alienated labour is in a certain sense free or directed, that is, human beings not only act on nature, but they act on their own actions. This characteristic is for Marx what distinguishes human species-activity from the activities of animals. Since, according to Marx: 'The animal is immediately one with its life-activity. It does not distinguish itself from it; it is that activity'.¹⁰² In contrast: 'Man makes his life-activity itself into an object of his willing and consciousness. He has conscious life-activity. It is not a determination with which he immediately

⁹⁹ Marx, 'Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte', p. 545.

¹⁰⁰ Marx, *Das Kapital, Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie, Vol. III*, MEW, Vol. 25, p. 828.

¹⁰¹ Marx, 'Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte', p. 515.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 516.

merges'.¹⁰³ The third characteristic of non-alienated labour is its diversity. As opposed to capitalism, which through its division of labour confines individuals to one single activity, communism allows for a more diverse working day. This third characteristic Marx formulated most succinctly not in the 1844 Manuscripts, in which he discusses the first two in terms of the species-activity, but in *Die deutsche Ideologie*, where he famously observes that in a communist society 'nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes'.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, such a society 'makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow'.¹⁰⁵

The significance of Marx's ideas of individuals as social beings and of non-alienated labour is that they supply the central institutional characteristic of a communist society — common ownership of the means of production — with a rationale. Thus, in Marx's account of communism, common ownership of the means of production emerges not as a dogmatic demand, but rather as the implication of a theory about the nature of human beings; it is not a goal on its own terms, but merely a means to achieve the ultimate goal of realising the very essence of human beings:

Die positive Aufhebung des Privateigentums, als die Aneignung des menschlichen Lebens, ist daher die positive Aufhebung, also die Rückkehr des Menschen aus Religion, Familie, Staat etc. in sein menschliches, d.h. gesellschaftliches Dasein.¹⁰⁶

Marx did, however, also discuss common ownership itself and referred to some institutional features of communism. These thoughts are generally contained in his critical reactions to the various then existing political proposals in which concrete institutional characteristics of communism were indeed drafted, such as for example in *Das Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* (*The Communist Manifesto*, 1848), and in the so-called 'Gotha Program', the first manifesto of the Socialist Workers' Party of Germany (SAPD), devised in the town Gotha in 1875. The members of the SAPD

¹⁰³ Marx, 'Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte', p. 516.

¹⁰⁴ Marx and Engels, *Die Deutsche Ideologie*, MEW, Vol. 3, pp. 5-530 (p. 33).

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Marx, 'Ökonomisch-philosophischen Manuskripte', p. 535.

called for 'the abolition of the wage system', that is, a remuneration system in which the pay of the workers simply equals the amount necessary for their survival, and for its replacement with 'the collective regulation of the total labour with a fair distribution of the proceeds of labour', a system in which workers' pay would be proportionate to the work they expend.¹⁰⁷ Although Marx, in his response to the manifesto, known as the 'Kritik des Gothaer Programms', concedes that the system of wage labour should indeed be abolished, he derides the alternative proposed by the SAPD.¹⁰⁸ Marx contends that the proposed system would also be unfair, although in a different sense than the capitalist one is. The unfairness of the SAPD alternative, Marx argues, would stem from failing to take into account the difference in predispositions, skills and needs of different individuals, instead of from rewarding the idle, non-working class, as is the case under capitalism. For example, a young, physically stronger worker would in principle be able to carry out a larger share of physically demanding work than an older, frailer one, but these capacities, which are to some extent genetically determined, should not entitle the former worker to a higher pay. It might actually be the case that a more just remuneration would result in the older worker being paid more, since, for instance, he is likely to need more resources to take care of his ill health. After he thoroughly scrutinises the faults marking this specific SAPD policy, Marx discloses his principle on which the compensation system for one's work should be based instead. This principle is contained in the famous slogan of 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs'.¹⁰⁹

Besides the character and organisation of work, Marx elaborated on another aspect of the communist society to a slightly greater extent: its political institutions. The political system that Marx advocated and discussed in most detail in relation to the Paris Commune, in the pamphlet entitled 'Civil War in France', is closest to what we nowadays understand under the term direct or radical democracy. The underlining characteristic of such a system is a fundamental overhaul of the state. As Engels once

¹⁰⁷ Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands, 'Gothaer Programm' (1875), quoted in Marx, 'Kritik des Gothaer Programms', MEW, Vol. 19, pp. 13-32 (p. 24).

¹⁰⁸ Marx, 'Kritik des Gothaer Programms', p. 21.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

observed: "The state is not to be "abolished".¹¹⁰ Instead, it is to be converted from an organ superimposed upon society into one completely subordinate to it.¹¹¹ In the *Manifesto*, Marx and Engels provide a few more clues into the nature of the communist state: it would be stripped of all regulative, legal, judiciary and other functions maintained by the liberal state and these would be replaced by the management and coordination of production.¹¹² The *Manifesto* lists some further, not strictly political parameters of the communist society, shared by most of the existing socialist and communist movements, from the precursors of the SAPD to the utopian socialists, including the abolition of child labour, abolition of the distinction between country and town, dissolution of the bourgeois family, and free education for all children.¹¹³ In *Das Kapital* Marx makes another remark regarding education, from which it is evident that he does not consider it should be pursued in an isolated fashion. Commenting on Robert Owen, Marx suggests that the most desirable form of learning and instruction would be one that is combined with productive activity, as well as with play.¹¹⁴

Marx, however, never expands on any details of life under communism. For example, he does not explain how the disappearance of differences between urban and rural areas is to be achieved, and what kind of settlement would eventually replace the two: small, in part self-sufficient, in part agricultural based communities; or whole regions, continents transformed into one great highly urbanised environment; cities in the forests or 'forest-cities', settlements which retain the modern structure of densely planned high buildings, but now covered with a thick horizontal blanket of vegetation? This lack of concrete detail in Marx's vision of communism is striking, especially when compared with accounts drafted by some of his contemporaries. Fourier, for example, assembled a very specific plan for an ideal type of settlement, the basic unit of which was a specific type of dwelling he called 'phalanstery', designed after the configuration of a 'phalanx', a military formation in Ancient Greece. For a phalanstery Fourier specified the number of inhabitants (between

¹¹⁰ Engels, 'Herrn Eugen Dühring's Umwälzung der Wissenschaft', MEW, Vol. 20, pp. 239-303 (p. 262).

¹¹¹ Marx, 'Kritik des Gothaer Programms', p. 27.

¹¹² Marx and Engels, *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei*, p. 481.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Marx, *Das Kapital, Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie, Vol. I*, pp. 507-08.

1600 and 1800, who would live in families of around four members), how much time each inhabitant would devote to different activities (three quarters to agriculture, and one to manufacturing), how its democratic institutions would be ruled, how profit would be distributed, etc.¹¹⁵ Other such examples of detailed institutional accounts include Owen's outline of various divorce procedures, complete with carefully specified 'cooling off' periods, and Saint-Simon's sketch of the membership rules of the maritime council, which would be responsible for the naval budget of the forthcoming new industrial order.¹¹⁶

This degree of facticity in describing utopian communities is indeed, as Marx contended, unprecedented, not only from his perspective, but also from that of our time, compared with specificity entailed in the accounts of some of the twentieth-century utopians.¹¹⁷ However, the kind of utopian thinking practised by the utopian socialists should not have presented for Marx the only possible way of devising a more concrete plan of a communist society. Giving a name to the building of utopia and specifying the number of its floors (the phalanstery is to have four) is not the only alternative way of discussing communist residential arrangements. Yet Marx remained silent on this and on other aspects of communism. In fact, over the course of his life he became increasingly silent about the future: most of his self-standing comments regarding the communist future are clustered in his earlier writings. The 'Critique of the Gotha Programme' and his manuscript on the 'Civil War in France' might present two possible exceptions. While they belong to Marx's later writings, the utopian references contained within them should be perceived as his reaction to the immediate political events, as corrections of the communist visions implicated in these events. As such, when we attempt to evaluate the presence of utopian thinking in Marx's writings, these references carry less weight than the ideas Marx advances more independently, that is, in developing his own theoretical corpus. Marx's largest

¹¹⁵ Charles Fourier, *The utopian vision of Charles Fourier; selected texts on work, love, and passionate attraction*, trans. and ed. by Jonathan Beecher and Richard Bienvenu (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1983), pp. 240-42.

¹¹⁶ Robert Owen, 'Appendix to "Lectures on the Marriages of the Priesthood of the Old Immoral World"', in *Selected Works of Robert Owen, Vol. 2*, ed. by Gregory Claeys (London: Pickering, 1993), 318-24.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Roger Paden, 'Marx's Critique of the Utopian Socialists', *Utopian Studies*, 13:2 (2002), 67-91. Paden argues that the accounts offered by the utopian socialists and Marx are indistinguishable in terms of their detailedness.

body of theories is, as is widely recognised, contained in his three volumes of *Das Kapital*. However, as Bertell Ollman contends, judging from an 1851 outline of this work, Marx was initially planning to include in it a more systematic outline of communism.¹¹⁸ The fact that the plan later changed could suggest that in the later stage of his life Marx developed more definite objections to utopian thinking, objections which outweighed the reasons he initially had for *Das Kapital* to encompass his outline of the future.

This categorisation of the early Marx as a utopian thinker and of the late Marx as an anti-utopian thinker is disputed by Daniel Brudney, Andrew Chitty and David Leopold, who argue that the utopian ideas of the early Marx, such as his accounts of human nature as species-being and of non-alienated labour, present the necessary foundations of the later theories he developed.¹¹⁹ By showing these utopian ideas to be constitutive of Marx's philosophy more broadly, the scholars of early Marx implicitly strengthen the utopian dimension of Marx.

Marx's historical context too strengthens the idea of him as an utopian thinker, simply in that he belonged to what can be most broadly designated as the political movements of communism and socialism. This movement was very much alive in Marx's time. As he illustrates himself in the memorable opening line of the *Manifesto*: 'A spectre is haunting Europe — a spectre of Communism'.¹²⁰ Although the word communism only came into use in the early 1840s, by the end of this decade, it became a commonplace designating a realistic alternative to the existing social and political order.¹²¹ This is seen both in terms of the fear it caused amongst the ruling aristocracy and bourgeoisie, and in terms of the support it drew among the workers. Despite the differences that divided the broad movement of

¹¹⁸ Ollman, 'Marx's Vision of Communism: a Reconstruction', p. 8. Note that Ollman does not provide a reference for this manuscript of Marx, and that I have not come across this observation in any other secondary literature.

¹¹⁹ Brudney, *Marx's Attempt to Leave Philosophy*; Andrew Chitty, 'Recognition and Relations of Production', *Historical Materialism*, 2 (1998), 57-97; David Leopold, *The young Karl Marx: German Philosophy, modern Politics, and human Flourishing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

¹²⁰ Marx and Engels, *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei*, p. 461.

¹²¹ Gareth Stedman Jones, 'Introduction' in Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, with an introduction and notes by Gareth Stedman Jones; trans. by Samuel Moore (London: Penguin Books, 2015), pp. 27-38.

communism and socialism into separate factions, it was underlined by the positive ideas of radical equality and freedom, and the abolition of private property. Marx, as a founder of this movement, subscribed to and advocated these ideas.

Thus, even if utopian visions are sometimes only implicitly present in Marx's writings — as in the case of his discussion of the species-being — or sometimes only in the form of unelaborated comments, or as part of his critical reactions to other socialists and communists, often motivated by strategic political reasons, utopian thinking does have a place in Marx's thought which is often under-appreciated. With the exception of Bloch, all other Critical Theorists downplay the significance of the utopian dimension in Marx and never examine it thoroughly. Yet it would be a mistake to simply portray Marx as a utopian thinker. Above I have already pointed to a few reasons why the depiction of Marx as a utopian thinker needs to be treated with caution. The most crucial qualification of the portrayal of Marx as a utopian thinker is, however, that he was a critic of utopian thinking, holding certain objections against it. Similarly as with utopian thinking itself, Marx's critique of utopian thinking is not advanced in a sustained and thoroughly argued fashion. Yet a strong implicit critique is contained in his writings, which I reconstruct in the remaining two sections of this chapter.

However, as suggested in the introduction to this chapter, Marx's critique of utopian thinking is not to be conflated with his own pejorative use of the term 'utopian', which was very general. By focusing on his more substantive criticism of utopian thinking I am not, however, contending that his rhetorical use of the word is irrelevant to our interests here, that is, to the subsequent development of the relationship between utopian thinking and Critical Theory. That this is in fact the case is proven not least because the derogatory use of the term had increased in the Marxist circles by the end of Marx's life and since then. Frank and Fritzie Manuel contend that the later Marxists attached this label to any theoretical opponent whom they considered to be misinterpreting Marx and Engels's original message.¹²² Lenin too used this term in the same negative sense: prior to the October Revolution of 1917 he described as 'utopian' the proposals of the two political adversaries of his

¹²² Manuel and Manuel, p. 698.

Bolshevik Party.¹²³ In contrast, the Critical Theorists themselves did not adopt this usage of utopian thinking, perhaps also because of their relatively lesser political activism: the context in which this label would have been primarily used. However, they must have been familiar with this strongly negative connotation of utopian thinking. It is thus plausible to think that their understanding of utopian thinking too would have been affected negatively, that is, that they would have perceived the pursuit of utopian thinking as being fundamentally at odds with the intentions of Marx's and, by extension, their own intellectual project.

Yet this conjecture about how Critical Theorists might have been affected by this original *usage* of the term utopian by Marx does not undermine the need to examine Marx's substantive, that is, his 'actual' objections to utopian thinking. The Critical Theorists, as Marx's close readers, must have been influenced by Marx's more specific objections, just as by the widespread usage of the term. Marx often articulated these objections without any reference to the term 'utopian', or in any other immediately evident way. Instead, Marx's arguments against utopian thinking are mostly implied in his own viewpoints and assumptions about fundamental categories such as history, knowledge and human beings. I suggest that Marx's criticism of utopian thinking can most effectively be grasped in two senses: first, as an impossible and, second, as a redundant endeavour, each of which can be justified from two standpoints internal to Marx's thought.¹²⁴

¹²³ Vladimir I. Lenin, 'Two Utopias', *Lenin Collected Works*, Vol. 18 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), pp. 355-59.

¹²⁴ Cf. David Leopold, 'On Marxian Utopophobia', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 54:1 (2016), 111-34; Daren Webb, *Marx, Marxism and utopia* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), Paden, 'Marx's Critique of the Utopian Socialists', Vincent Geoghegan, 'Marxism and Utopianism', *Utopian Studies*, 1 (1987), 37-51; Steven Lukes, 'Marxism and Utopianism' in *Utopias*, ed. by Peter Alexander and Roger Gill (London: Duckworth, 1984), pp. 153-67. One argument that this literature mentions, but which I omit, is the so-called Marx's 'anti-democratic' critique, namely the idea that affirming a certain society of the future restricts the future individuals to self-determine their existing conditions. See, e.g., Leopold, 'On Marxian Utopophobia', pp. 118-22. I find that this argument lacks the necessary primary textual evidence.

Utopia cannot be envisaged

The first objection by Marx to utopian thinking is that it is impossible. What this might mean is not immediately obvious. The suggestion is presumably not that we are unable to draw up plans of an ideal future society; after all, Marx and Engels were familiar with a wealth of past and present examples that suggest otherwise. The objection is, rather, an epistemological one, namely an objection concerning the nature and sources of knowledge contained in descriptions of utopian societies. More specifically, it is an objection to whether the ideas contained in these descriptions bear any resemblance to reality; whether these ideas could correspond to objectively valid, accurate knowledge, to something we could call truth. In this epistemological sense, Marx refuted the possibility of utopian thinking and argued that it was impossible to construct any kind of objective account of the future society. Thus, utopian thinking practised by the utopian socialists and others does not, in Marx's view, qualify as *knowledge* about the future. Whatever conceptions of the future these thinkers came up with, they had nothing to do with the future, for knowledge of the future was, for Marx, an impossible kind of knowledge to have. Below, I explore two rationales of this position. The first is contained in Marx's adherence to materialism; the second in his understanding of how the human mind actually produces knowledge.

Historical materialism as an impediment to creating new ideas

In essence, materialism purports the primacy of the realm of matter over that of thought; in other words, our material conditions determine our ideas and understanding of the world. Whilst in the materialist framework in the broadest sense, matter itself is a very broad category and amounts to all objects that have physical substance, like mass, Marx's concept of materialism, namely historical materialism, was more specific. He argued that there is a very specific set of material objects that is primarily responsible for the changes of our ideas. This set corresponds to inputs into the production process, like machines, land, and water, as well as to relations of production which stand for the distribution of these inputs among different social groups, that is, who controls them and decides how, where and for what purposes they should be utilised. For Marx the relations of production

(Produktionsverhältnisse) of a society give that society its fundamental character and make it, for example, a capitalist rather than some other kind of society. In Marx's words:

*die gesellschaftlichen Produktionsverhältnisse [...] in ihrer Gesamtheit bilden das, was man die gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse, die Gesellschaft nennt, und zwar eine Gesellschaft auf bestimmter, geschichtlicher Entwicklungsstufe, eine Gesellschaft mit eigentümlichem, unterscheidendem Charakter. Die antike Gesellschaft, die feudale Gesellschaft, die bürgerliche Gesellschaft sind solche Gesamtheiten von Produktionsverhältnissen, deren jede zugleich eine besondere Entwicklungsstufe in der Geschichte der Menschheit bezeichnet.*¹²⁵

For Marx, the major institutions of a historical epoch, specifically its legal and political systems, but more broadly the accepted ideas and knowledge of a society, are deeply conditioned by its relations of production. An implication of historical materialism relevant to our concerns here is that ideas of the future can only be engendered in the future itself, once the existing relations of production will have been reorganised; and, conversely, that the ideas engendered under the prevailing relations of production can never be ideas of the future. Even if they might appear to be different from the ideas of the present, they are still only ideas of the present and nothing else.

This implication is articulated very clearly in Marx's Gotha Critique. In this text, Marx argues that the SAPD manifesto is, in every respect, economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birth-marks of the old society and hence that it cannot represent a socialist society.¹²⁶ The programme that was intended to be socialist, but that is phrased in the language of the old, bourgeois society, cannot actually imply a socialist programme. Marx contends that socialist programmes 'cannot allow such bourgeois phrases to pass over in silence the *conditions* that alone give them meaning'.¹²⁷ In this assertion the underlying materialist viewpoint is evident — it is 'the conditions', by which Marx means the material conditions of the

¹²⁵ Marx and Engels, 'Lohnarbeit und Kapital', MEW, Vol. 6, pp. 397-423 (p. 408).

¹²⁶ Marx, 'Kritik des Gothaer Programms', p. 19.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 15.

relations of production, that provide phrases, or ideas more generally, with meaning in the first place. In the Gotha Critique Marx provides some illuminating examples of how ideas of the supposedly future society are still marked by this material character of the existing society. In his words, a socialist principle which the SAPD included in their manifesto was that an individual producer receives back from society exactly what he gives to it.¹²⁸ Whereas by adopting this remuneration policy the workers were supposed to be compensated fairly, in Marx's view, this policy was not radically fairer than that prevailing under the capitalist regime. As I have already suggested above, Marx contends that on the basis of the scheme proposed by the SAPD, due to differences in initial predispositions and skills, 'one receives factually more than another, one is richer than another'.¹²⁹ Marx identifies as the flaw of this policy the fact that it was underpinned by the principles of commodity exchange, and of workers seen merely as commodities: two key tenets of capitalist society, according to which 'the individual producer receives back from society [...] exactly what he gives to it'.¹³⁰ Marx argues that as soon as one attempts to address a specific aspect of the future society — in this case, of how that which workers produce, i.e., various goods and services, should be distributed — one unknowingly answers them in terms of the existing applicable terms, here in terms of exchangeability and commodification, and thereby does not specify anything about the properly future society.

This objection to utopian thinking presents a certain paradox. This paradox is the following: on the one hand, Marx's historical materialism implies that since the existing relations of production always condition the existing ideas, these ideas cannot be new, they cannot be indicative of the new relations of production of the future; on the other hand, however, this very same historical materialism does contain ideas that have to do with the future — it not only posits what the relations of production in the past were, but also what they will look like in the future. Marx does not only analyse the ancient, the feudal and the capitalist forms but also the communist form of the relations of production. So, does Marx think we can possess knowledge of the future or not?

¹²⁸ Marx, 'Kritik des Gothaer Programms', p. 19.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 21.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 20.

This paradox can be partially reconciled if we distinguish between different types of knowledge we could hold about the future: for example, between more and less specific or detailed ones. This differentiation is common in the scholarship on the relationship between Marx and utopian thinking which emphasises that Marx was opposed to writing plans, programmes or blueprints of the future. Amongst others, David Leopold argues that the key to understanding this relationship is to understand that what Marx was hostile to, above all, were '*detailed* descriptions of the ideal society'.¹³¹ In this account, the idea of common ownership and management of the means of production is not classified as specific knowledge of the future. This differentiation can be justified from Marx's own perspective. One possible explanation could be that since relations of production present the most fundamental aspect of society, knowledge of these relations necessitates a privileged status, including a privileged epistemological status. Another, more plausible explanation is related to the deterministic nature of Marx's historical materialism. Here I do not mean the deterministic relationship between the relations of production and the superstructure, but the determined character of the relations of production themselves. I consider this highly disputed Marxian topic in more detail in the final section of this chapter, as it presents a distinct critique by Marx of utopian thinking related to its redundancy. In brief, however, it can be said here that Marx did accept a certain deterministic philosophy of the future. According to Marx, the form of each set of relations of production for subsequent historical epochs is subject to certain objective laws of history. These laws are independent of time: whilst some forms of relations of production, like communism, are not yet realised, their existence is nevertheless already warranted by these laws. These laws can be perceived as a justification of why, from Marx's perspective, knowledge about the future relations of production is more tenable than knowledge about other aspects of the future.

¹³¹ Leopold, 'On Marxian Utopophobia', p. 114.

Another possible way to reconcile this paradox of (im)possibility of knowledge about the future would be to weaken Marx's claim that such knowledge is indeed impossible at all, by saying that it can only be engendered in a very specific manner, for example through a process of close *reflection* on this knowledge. What I mean by this process of reflection is illustrated by Marx himself when he criticises the ideas of a communist society put forward by those whom he perceived as his political adversaries. In this chapter I have outlined one such illustration, namely Marx's criticism of the claim in the Gotha programme concerning the remuneration scheme of workers proposed by the SAPD. Marx takes the suggested idea of such a scheme (that one's wage should be proportional to one's output) as his starting point and concludes with his own positive idea ('from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs'). The process of how Marx arrives from his starting to his concluding point entails considering how each individual concept, such as the notion of the wage itself and of one's output, is mediated by existing material conditions, and by attempts to find alternative more adequate concepts. The process moreover corresponds to identifying how and when these ideas emerged, and to a consideration of whether they might not have been discredited by the events that occurred since then. This latter part of the process of reflection appears, as well as in Marx's Critique of the Gotha Programme, in Marx and Engels's criticism of the so-called utopian socialists. Whilst, according to Marx and Engels, the central figures of utopian socialism were indeed Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen, the pair is more critical of the followers of the latter, that is, the groups and social movements that advanced the ideas of the original triumvirate. Marx and Engels find the greatest fault with the Owenites, Fourierists, Saint-Simonians in that they were dogmatically applying the policies proposed by their forerunners and strictly adhering to their theoretical systems, without considering whether these ideas are still applicable to the current historical circumstances.¹³² Once ideas are subjected to this process of reflection, Marx might recognise them as a certain knowledge of the future. We could then say that a better way of

¹³² See Marx and Engels, *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei*, p. 491; Engels, 'Die Entwicklung des Sozialismus von der Utopie zur Wissenschaft', pp. 189-201.

formulating Marx's view on the possibility of the knowledge of the future is that it is not absolute but dependent on this condition of reflection.

Although the second approach to reconciling the paradox seems quite plausible, especially when compared to the first one, recognition of which requires us to accept the existence of those objective laws of history, a strong tension remains between Marx's various ideas on the question of whether we can know the future. In fact, this tension is exacerbated and further complicated once we look at Marx's other rationale for why knowledge of the future is impossible, which, just as his rationale of materialism, is rather problematic.

Imaginary vs. rational ideas

The other rationale behind Marx's contention that utopian thinking is impossible stems from his conception of the human psyche or mind. Unlike some other disciplines, like political economy, socio-economic history or even philosophical anthropology, psychology was not systematically developed by Marx. To approach the understanding of how people and societies function in and comprehend the world from a psychological point of view was in fact a central development of Marxist thought advanced by the Critical Theorists: not only in the narrow sense of critical theory, as I employ it here, as more or less synonymous with the Frankfurt School, but as corresponding to Western Marxism more generally. The contribution towards a psychologically richer Marxism made by the Frankfurt School thinkers themselves lies in incorporating Freud's psychoanalytic insights into Marx's understanding of ideology.¹³³ Yet, even if there are many psychological treatises to be found among the collected works of these later Marxist thinkers and none in Marx's own, underlying his thought is a certain conception of the human psyche, one aspect of which grounds one criticism he makes of utopian thinking.

This aspect can be usefully conceptualised in terms of a dichotomy that Marx appears to have drawn between two cognitive faculties, namely between reason and

¹³³ See, e.g., Joel Whitebook, 'The Marriage of Marx and Freud', in *Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory*, ed. by Rush, pp. 74-102.

imagination. For Marx, the two seem to differ in terms of their relation to external reality: whereas reason is fundamentally reliant on inputs from external reality, that is, on our observations, our sense perceptions of this reality, imagination is not. Instead, Marx viewed imagination as a process purely internal to the human mind, not dependent on or influenced at all by what happens in the outside world.

This distinction between reason and imagination informs several writings by Marx and Engels. In *Die deutsche Ideologie* they contrast their type of materialism to that of the Young Hegelians in that theirs is premised on conceptions of individuals 'as they *really* are', by which they mean that these conceptions are merely conceptual articulations of the material or objective situation of individuals.¹³⁴ In contrast, the theories of the Young Hegelians stemmed from conceptions of individuals 'as they may appear in their own or other people's imagination'.¹³⁵ In the *Misère de la philosophie* (*Poverty of Philosophy*), Marx criticises Proudhon along a very similar line, though not by employing the term 'imagination'. Marx dismisses Proudhon's ideas because they are not based on what is happening before his eyes but result instead solely from his mind.¹³⁶ Further, in his own late writings, Engels encodes this view of imagination most concisely. Compared to all other existing theories of communism and socialism, his and Marx's theory of communism is not a 'concoction', engendered by means of the 'imagination', but is instead derived only from observations of the external world, corresponding directly to 'an insight into the nature, the conditions and the consequent general aims of the struggle waged by the proletariat'.¹³⁷

For Marx and Engels, this differentiation is also epistemological. Reason and imagination differ not only in whether they rely on the inputs from external reality but also in the sort of ideas they engender. In their view, reason is constitutive of scientific knowledge and imagination of imaginary ideas and phantasies. Scientific knowledge is supposed to be objectively valid and correspond to, or at least

¹³⁴ Marx and Engels, *Die deutsche Ideologie*, p. 25.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Marx, *Das Elend der Philosophie*, p. 143.

¹³⁷ Engels, 'Zur Geschichte des Bundes der Kommunisten', MEW, Vol. 21, pp. 206-24 (p. 212).

approach, truth as such. In contrast, phantasies have no objective relevance and pertain only to the subject which engendered it in the first place.

The designation of ideas as fantastical or imaginary needs to be taken with some reservation, as its meaning is probably also rhetorical. It probably functioned to some extent, as the very label of utopianism did, simply as a device for Marx and Engels to politically distance themselves from certain other thinkers. Marx and Engels did not consider all ideas and thoughts engendered by the utopian socialists, Proudhon and others, to be fantasies. They sometimes complimented these thinkers for their contributions to scientific knowledge. Engels in particular praised Owen for relying in his investigations on empirical inputs.¹³⁸ Moreover, utopian socialists themselves perceived their methods as scientific. Saint-Simon claims that in his investigations of 'the best possible constitution' he 'will use only two principles which can be relied on to produce absolute proof: reason and experience'.¹³⁹ Similarly, Owen contrasts 'the inventive faculties' that had hitherto been used in 'this inquiry' into the nature of 'the good society' to 'experience', which he regards as 'the only true guide that can lead to true knowledge on any subject'.¹⁴⁰ This perception of their own approach is corroborated by today's view, especially of Saint-Simon, but to some extent also of Owen and Fourier, as being precursors of positivism, a methodological tradition that prioritises the use of empirical data above all else.

Marx and Engels were, however, very insistent that utopian socialists' visions of the future were fantastical or imaginary ideas. That is, whereas not all of their thoughts and ideas were engendered by the faculty of imagination, those that have to do with the future were. In 'The First Draft of the *The Civil War in France*', Marx criticises the utopian socialists and their followers for trying to 'compensate for the historical

¹³⁸ See Engels, 'Die Entwicklung des Sozialismus von der Utopie zur Wissenschaft', p. 198.

¹³⁹ Henri de Saint-Simon, 'On the Reorganization of European Society' in Saint-Simon, *The Political Thought of Saint-Simon*, ed. by Ghita Ionescu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 83-98 (p. 87).

¹⁴⁰ Robert Owen, *A New View of Society* in Owen, *A New View of Society and Other Writings*, intro. by G. D. H. Cole (London and New York: J. M. Dent, 1971), p. 34.

conditions of the movement by phantastic pictures and plans of a new society'.¹⁴¹ It is, in particular, the 'pictures and plans of a new society' that Marx perceives as phantastic.

We can now see how Marx and Engels's differentiation between reason and imagination served as a rationale for the claim that the knowledge of the future is impossible. The rationale does not lie only in Marx's view, as Roger Paden puts it, 'of the essential epistemological limitations of scientific knowledge'.¹⁴² In addition, it lies also in Marx's view of the epistemological limitations of imagination. Whereas Marx ascribes to this cognitive faculty the ability to look into the future — as opposed to reason, for which insight forward in time was simply impossible, since empirical information about future states are not yet available — he contends that the ensuing thoughts and ideas are completely devoid of any objective validity. Grasping Marx's rationale of his critique of utopian thinking not only in terms of his conception of reason but also in terms of imagination, basically in terms of the differences between the two, is essential for our understanding of Bloch's stance on the possibility of utopian thinking. In contrast to Marx, Bloch insists on the possibility of knowing of the future, and a central tenet behind this claim is indeed his own conception of imagination, which, in his view, engenders knowledge not only of subjective but also of objective validity. Thereby Bloch advances not only a new conception of human mind, but also a new anthropological and ontological theory, in which the reason-imagination binary is no longer applicable. This dualism can, however, not be sustained entirely even in Marx's own thought. This claim brings us back to Marx's materialism, which posits that *everything* intangible is conditioned by material forces. Where does the faculty of imagination fit in this scheme? Marx and Engels contend that the issue with imagination is that it does not take into account what happens in the objective world — but how could they see this subjective faculty as existing somehow separately of this objective world in the first place? We could say that Marx and Engels's notion of the imagination presents a certain remnant of idealism, which in its crude variety embraces the idea that the spiritual, ideal or conceptual reside in their own independent realm. This second

¹⁴¹ Marx, 'The First Draft of the *The Civil War in France*' in *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 22 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975), pp. 437-514 (p. 499). (Note that Marx wrote this text originally in English).

¹⁴² Paden, 'Marx's Critique of the Utopian Socialists', p. 78.

rationale of Marx further complicates the paradox of (im)possibility of utopian thinking. As with the first explanation, this second one too contradicts the rest of Marx's philosophical framework, thus leaving Marx's followers needing to revise his historical materialism so that it would result in a more consistent answer to the question of whether or not utopian thinking is possible.

Utopian visions are insignificant

Marx's other central objection to utopian thinking is that he considers it to be unnecessary for facilitating desirable historical change: what one says about the future is completely irrelevant to what actually happens in the future. One argument supporting this objection follows from Marx's philosophy of history, and the other from another aspect to his psychological understanding of the human being.

Objectivity of historical change: utopia cannot be enacted

Marx's philosophy of history posits the process of historical change as both an objective and a subjective process. This means that whilst historical change does not occur independently of the intentions, consciousness and actions of individuals, it is also not fully under their control. As Marx puts it in *Die heilige Familie*, history is not an autonomous entity possessing its own agency: 'History "does nothing", it "possesses no immense wealth", it "wages no battles". It is man, real, living man who does all that, who possesses and fights; "history" is not, as it were, a person apart'.¹⁴³ Besides being conditioned by individuals, it is conditioned by objective forces — forces that are by definition, at least partially, beyond the sphere of human influence. The objective and subjective factors in part constitute each other: technology, as one objective force, does not just progress on its own — humans devise and implement the idea of how to improve existing technological structures. On the other hand, the already existing technology greatly affects the scope of possible ideas for its own improvement. The relevant point of his critique of utopian thinking is that, for Marx, the objective forces are the more important ones in

¹⁴³ Marx and Engels, *Die heilige Familie*, MEW, Vol. 2, pp. 3-223 (p. 198).

directing the course of history. This is not a straightforward point, as they are of greater importance only in a very narrow sense, namely in that the objective factors engender the 'critical' moments of history, such as revolutions. Although humans always play a role in bringing about these critical objective conditions and transforming them into different ones, they themselves cannot bring about a revolution itself if the objective conditions have not been already met.¹⁴⁴ If the objective conditions are not 'ripe', that is, not such as to necessitate a change in the economic and political organisation of a society, no protest, no strike, no *coup d'état*, no building of an anarchist collective, will actually set this change in motion.

An implication of this view of historical changes is that people's conception of the post-revolutionary society is, for Marx, actually wholly irrelevant to its realisation. This conception is thus also irrelevant to what he, in his capacity as the intellectual, philosopher, and member of the so-called intelligentsia of the revolution, thinks about this society. Instead, his task is only to 'prove concretely how in present capitalist society the material, etc. conditions have at last been created which enable and compel the workers to lift this historical curse'.¹⁴⁵ Marx posits here not only that a certain state of material conditions enables revolutionary action by the workers, but moreover that it *compels* them to take this action. In that the workers are compelled to act in particular way, a certain inevitability of historical change is implied. The progressive impoverishment of the working class will necessarily lead to their revolt, and, furthermore, to the realisation of communism. This realisation of communism is not a result of intentional human action. In writing about the Paris Commune, Marx famously insists that these intentions do not play a role in directing the actions of proletariat, that they 'have no ideals to realise', 'no ready-made utopias' to introduce by 'decree' — but rather that their task is 'to set free elements of the new society with which old collapsing bourgeois society itself is pregnant'.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ The question of how prominent the degree of automatism or inevitability is in the development of the objective conditions is one of the most disputed points in scholarship on Marx and Marxism. There is a general agreement that the early Marx emphasises more the role of human agency, and the mature one that of objective forces.

¹⁴⁵ Marx, 'Kritik des Gothaer Programms', p. 17.

¹⁴⁶ Marx, *The Civil War in France, Marx and Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 22 (London: Lawrence&Wishart, 1975), pp. 307-59 (p. 335).

Another way of formulating this same view of Marx would be to say that the possibilities for a new society of the future are contained in the objective conditions themselves. We could imagine these possibilities as soap bubbles that are waiting to be burst. Human action is one of the factors that can prick these bubbles and release their content. As we will see, Bloch considers this view of Marx to be too narrow. For Bloch, the possibilities of the new are incarnated in human beings themselves, which renders the subjective side of historical change more significant than Marx thought. The role of human action is, then, not simply to set free the ready-made elements but to constructively participate in the production of these elements, including by creating visions of a desirable future.

Humans as rational beings: understanding leads to action

In denying that workers can know the form and features of a society which could better meet their needs, demands and interests, Marx is not, however, claiming that they do not understand that the existing capitalist society is ill-suited to serving these needs — the workers eventually become aware of the negative effects that capitalism has on their lives. Awareness or consciousness, as one of the subjective factors, is dependent on the objective ones. This means that the crystallisation of the workers' interests is determined by the development of objective factors towards a critical point. This determination is not complete or automatic — the condition of the objective factors does not, on its own, translate fully into the allegedly corresponding state of consciousness of the workers. This incompleteness and lack of automatism allows the ideas of the workers to be influenced by other factors, such by the ideas and theories of the intellectuals and philosophers, who supposedly have a privileged access to the state of affairs. The kind of idea engendered by philosophers that would play a constructive role in this sense was for Marx very specific: as he posits in the remark above, taken from his *Gotha Critique*, his task is to prove the existing state of the material conditions, and, in his widely-known assertion in *Das Kapital*, to critically analyse the actual facts.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ Marx, 'Nachwort zur zweiten Auflage', *Das Kapital*, Vol. 1, pp. 18-28 (p. 25).

Entailed in this view is another presumption which further consolidates Marx's argument that utopian thinking is unnecessary. In viewing *proving* the existing conditions, and revealing *facts* as constructive activities through which consciousness and hence actions are influenced, Marx prioritises the rational side of the human psyche. That is, Marx not only considers that the objectivity of reality can be comprehended through his own rational capacities, but moreover that this reality can be conveyed to others, and accepted by them merely on the basis of coherency, logics, and consistency of the account of this reality. Once the workers *understand* their actual situation, they will take the recourse to revolutionary action and transform the world into one more in accordance with their interests. The workers only need to see that they 'have a world to win', as the fine line of the *Manifesto* has it.¹⁴⁸

In this chapter I have argued that, from the point of view of Marx's theoretical framework, it is not evident why utopian thinking would be needed in processes of social change in general, and specifically in conceptual projects that aim to facilitate this social change. From his writings only one argument can be reconstructed supporting the opposite, namely, the actual presence of utopian thinking in his writings. As discussed at the beginning of the chapter, a certain positive utopian vision is entailed in his texts. This objection is substantial and poses the question as to why Marx elaborates the content of communism in the first place, given that he considers it to be unnecessary. I have highlighted reasons which make the presence of utopian thinking in Marx contingent on certain marginal factors: for example, that much of Marx's comments on communism can be comprehended as reactions to existing visions which he thinks need to be corrected. But it is implausible to think that these reasons can account for the whole of utopian thinking that pervades Marx. We are thus left only with an impression or a suspicion that Marx appreciates utopian thinking in some positive way, but not with actual reasons, internal to his theories, as to why this might be the case.

¹⁴⁸ Marx and Engels, *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei*, p. 493.

This incongruence between the presence of utopian thinking and the lack of any theoretical justification for it is one puzzle that Critical Theorists inherited from Marx. The other puzzle concerns Marx's paradox about the possibility of envisaging the future. Whereas Marx is clear in his claims that the future and thus also the utopian future cannot be known, he is less clear in his rationalisation of these claims. In fact, both rationales I have identified, one related to his materialistic worldview and one to his conceptions of imagination and reason, contradict many other aspects of his philosophy. The inheritors of his philosophy thus also inherited the confusions and unresolved issues Marx had with utopian thinking. In what follows, I look at the attempts by two Critical Theorists, Adorno and Bloch, to deal with these unresolved issues.

CHAPTER 2

The origins of Adorno's *Utopieverbot*

Adorno and Marxist theory in the early twentieth century

Theodor W. Adorno (1903-1969) was raised in a Jewish bourgeois family of tradesmen.¹⁴⁹ In stark contrast to Marx he was never a socialist or communist activist.¹⁵⁰ Nevertheless, he subscribed to the principles of such politics, even if in a highly abstract and uncompromisingly critical way. This critical side of him became evident most famously in the context of the 1968 events into which Adorno quickly became implicated.¹⁵¹ Adorno was by then an established left-wing intellectual, recognised as a thinker whose theories substantially influenced the students' demands. His opposition to students came forth especially clearly in December of that year when the students occupied the premises of the Institute for Social Research, where Adorno had resumed his post in 1949 upon his return from forced emigration in 1933, when the Nazi regime barred him from teaching.¹⁵² Throughout this period Adorno, however, remained formally affiliated with the Institute, the operations of which never ceased, but were instead moved, first to Geneva and Paris and eventually to New York, at the premises of the Columbia University. After the end of the War Adorno also spent some time in California, dismayed by the then emergent popular culture, which he labelled the 'culture industry', a term introduced in the *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, co-authored with Horkheimer and transcribed by his wife, Gretel Adorno, in Santa Barbara during the Second World War. This book, probably the most well known work today associated with Critical Theory, set the tone of the change in direction that this tradition underwent in the postwar era. This is exemplified in a famous remark that Adorno included in his other major work dealing with the 'damaged life' under capitalism, *Minima Moralia* (1951): namely that poetry after Auschwitz is impossible. Many commentators

¹⁴⁹ This section draws on Claussen, *Theodor W. Adorno: One Last Genius*.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Alex Demirović, *Der nonkonformistische Intellektuelle: die Entwicklung der Kritischen Theorie zur Frankfurter Schule* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999).

¹⁵¹ Cf. Wolfgang Kraushaar, ed., *Frankfurter Schule und Studentenbewegung; von der Flaschenpost zum Molotowcocktail 1946 bis 1995* (Hamburg: HIS Verlag, 1998).

interpret this tone as pessimistic with respect to the possibility of social change the Critical Theorists desired. In parallel to this change of tone in the postwar era, Adorno has been perceived as distancing himself further from activist politics, barricading himself in 'the Grand Hotel Abyss'. This derogatory term was invented by Georg Lukács to describe the activities of the Critical Theorists as self-indulgent, with at best no, and at worst damaging consequences for the real world. Adorno, however, defied such accusations. From his perspective, the integration of theory and political activism devised by Marx had proven flawed by history, and his aim was to revise theory's connection to practice in such a way as to make its contribution more, rather than less, effective and relevant. Adorno developed this transformed approach of theory to the greatest extent in the *Negative Dialektik*, published three years before his death in the summer of 1969.

As discussed in my Introduction, the project of Critical Theory is best perceived as a continuation of Marxian philosophy. Adorno himself acknowledged that the need for philosophy or theory remains precisely because Marx's prognosis of the end of capitalism and the arrival of communism has not been realised.¹⁵³ The central question that thus motivated the establishment of the Institute in Frankfurt in 1923 and the activities of its members in subsequent decades was how to revise Marx's key insights so as to bring about their realisation in practice. That is, while Adorno and other Critical Theorists adhered to the overall thrust of Marx's project, namely that the existence and the sufferings of the insulted and the injured is neither rational nor necessary, and thus need to be resisted and overcome, they perceived the then existing casts of Marxism to be essentially flawed. Critical Theorists, but also two of their immediate intellectual predecessors, Karl Korsch and Lukács, considered that the Marxism of the early twentieth century degenerated into yet another form of positivistic and scientific creed. A particular problem Critical Theorists identified in this so-called vulgar or orthodox Marxism was an insufficient stress on the Hegelian roots of Marx's thought, namely aspects such as consciousness, spontaneity and subjectivity. An objective of the Institute in Frankfurt was thus to recover Marx's Hegelian roots. Moreover, Marx's theory also needed to be revised in the light of certain vital social, political and economic

¹⁵³ Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, p. 3.

conditions that separated Critical Theorists from the concerns that Marx and his contemporaries faced in the mid-nineteenth century. By the time of the early twentieth century, capitalism entered a qualitatively new stage, with its modernising effects being felt more intensively and widely across society. On the other hand, socialism evolved from being limited to a few examples of rather isolated communities into a state-wide phenomenon in the case of the Soviet Union. In addition, the Critical Theorists contested some of Marx's own basic premises. One of the most highly contested was Marx's idea of the existence of a revolutionary agent, a particular section of population who has a privileged role to play in the transformation of history. Critical Theorists considered this idea to be both epistemologically problematic and one that can be utilised for authoritarian purposes.¹⁵⁴

In their attempt to recuperate Marx's central insights into a body of theory, which would, on the one hand, stay faithful to Marx's Hegelian foundations, and, on the other hand, be suited better to the new historical situation, Critical Theorists undertook a thorough re-reading of Marx's work. Whereas certain issues with Marx's theories, such as its premised existence of a transcendental subject of history, motivated this revision in the first place, other problems and tensions cropped up in the course of it. One of these tensions was the paradoxical place of utopian thinking in Marx's thought.

What is the *Utopieverbot*?

The argument of this chapter is that Adorno's response to Marx's confusions regarding the ends of utopian thinking strengthened the anti-utopian dimension of Marx's position. More specifically, I suggest that the strengthening of this anti-utopian dimension in Adorno took the form of imposing a ban on the practice of utopian thinking in Critical Theory. I call this prohibition on utopian thinking by Adorno the '*Utopieverbot*'. Given that Marx too held his own objections against positively envisioning the future society, it might appear confusing that I apply this

¹⁵⁴ Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, pp. 41-42.

label only to Adorno. However, in contrast to Marx, Adorno actually respected this ban. By no means was Adorno's prohibition simply a rhetorical device: it was constitutive of his theoretical framework.

Adorno's clearest and best known articulation of the *Utopieverbot* is the following passage from his *Negative Dialektik*:

Die materialistische Sehnsucht, die Sache zu begreifen, will das Gegenteil [von Idealismus]: nur bilderlos wäre das volle Objekt zu denken. Solche Bilderlosigkeit konvergiert mit dem theologischen Bilderverbot. Der Materialismus säkularisierte es, indem er nicht gestattete, die Utopie positiv auszumalen; das ist der Gehalt seiner Negativität. Mit der Theologie kommt er dort überein, wo er am materialistischsten ist.¹⁵⁵

In this passage, in which Adorno refers to Critical Theory as 'Materialismus', he asserts that the object of its longing — a utopian society — can only be thought without picturing it. Adorno then reiterates the *Utopieverbot* by claiming that materialism does not allow for a utopia to be positively imagined. In his epilogue to *Minima Moralia*, this prohibition is expressed in very similar terms, insisting that a critical theorist is reluctant to engage herself in 'positive images of the proper society, of its members, even of those who would accomplish'.¹⁵⁶ Perhaps less well known is Adorno's formulation of the *Utopieverbot* in the *Ästhetische Theorie*, in which Adorno applies it not only to Critical Theory but also to art, contending that 'the wordless, imageless utopia [...] reigns also over artworks'.¹⁵⁷

Just as clearly as Adorno himself, scholars of Adorno are unanimous in claiming that Adorno in fact imposed the *Utopieverbot*. Simon Jarvis notes that Adorno considers philosophy unable to address utopia 'positively and explicitly', and similarly, Susan Buck-Morss insists that Adorno refuses 'to delineate the nature of postrevolutionary

¹⁵⁵ Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, pp. 206-07.

¹⁵⁶ Adorno, *Minima Moralia – Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben*, GS, Vol. 4, p. 297.

¹⁵⁷ Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, GS, Vol. 7, p. 367.

society'.¹⁵⁸ Less explicitly, yet nonetheless pointing in the same direction, Rahel Jaeggi observes that, in Adorno's view:

in einer falschen Gesellschaft lässt sich das Gute nicht *tun*, es lässt sich nicht *erkennen*, und unabhängig von seiner Verwirklichung *existiert* es auch nicht, steht also als unabhängiger (kontrafaktischer) Maßstab für das richtige Handeln nicht zur Verfügung.¹⁵⁹

Given the consensus on the *existence* of the *Utopieverbot*, it is curious that the existing literature offers no comprehensive *explanation* of this ban, especially of its underlying rationale — why did Adorno institute and adhere to this ban? Most commonly, what is given is a mere clue to an explanation. This clue points to the Jewish heritage of Critical Theory, in particular to the so-called *Bilderverbot* (image-ban) — a principal idiosyncrasy of the Jewish religion, demarcating it from its forbearing pagan creeds. It corresponds to a taboo on depicting or visualising God, and is encoded in the Bible as one of the Ten Commandments: 'You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below'.¹⁶⁰ Gerhard Schweppenhäuser construes the link between the prohibition against envisioning a future society and the *Bilderverbot* by observing that 'Adorno gives us no detailed picture of utopia. He refuses to conjure up images of the better condition. He stresses that the Old Testament prohibition on images remains philosophically and socially mandatory'.¹⁶¹ In the same vein, Martin Jay draws no significant distinction between the *Bilderverbot* and the *Utopieverbot*, asserting that the latter is a mere 'reproduction' of the former.¹⁶² This explanation of Adorno's *Utopieverbot* in terms of the Jewish ban on images is not surprising given that Adorno himself frequently discusses the two together, including in the longer passage I quoted above from the *Negative Dialektik*. Here, Adorno not only claims that the prohibitions of Judaism and materialism resemble each other, but by evoking the process of secularisation, he implies that Critical Theory's aversion

¹⁵⁸ Jarvis, p. 7; Buck-Morss, p. 130.

¹⁵⁹ Jaeggi, 'Kein Einzelner vermag etwas dagegen' in *Dialektik der Freiheit*, ed. by Honneth, p. 123.

¹⁶⁰ Exodus 20. 4.

¹⁶¹ Gerhard Schweppenhäuser, *Theodor W. Adorno zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Hamburg Junius, 2009), p. 77.

¹⁶² Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 56.

towards utopian thinking is indeed derived from Judaism. In another instance, in his essay on 'Vernunft und Offenbarung', Adorno does not differentiate between the two prohibitions at all, contending that what Critical Theory adheres to is the *Bilderverbot* itself. He contends that he does not see any other possibility: 'I see no other possibility than an extreme ascesis toward any type of revealed faith, an extreme loyalty to the *Bilderverbot*, far beyond what this once originally meant'.¹⁶³ The idea that the *Utopieverbot* is not necessarily distinguishable from the Jewish *Bilderverbot* was shared by other members of the Frankfurt Institute. Towards the end of his life, in a 1970 interview with the magazine *Der Spiegel*, Max Horkheimer reflects on the Jewish heritage of Critical Theory, and contends that its care in dealing with the name of God is indeed of Jewish heritage:

Und zwar auch in der Weise, dass diese Behutsamkeit in unserer Gesellschaftstheorie, die wir die Kritische nennen, eingegangen ist. 'Du sollst dir kein Bild von Gott machen', heißt es in der Bibel. Du kannst nicht darstellen, was das absolute Gute ist. Der fromme Jude versucht, das Wort 'Gott' nach Möglichkeit zu vermeiden, ja er schreibt es nicht aus, sondern macht ein Apostroph. So nennt auch die Kritische Theorie das Absolute vorsichtig 'das Andere'. Was mich bewegt, ist die theologische Idee angewandt auf eine vernünftige Theorie der Gesellschaft.¹⁶⁴

This chapter explores Adorno's argument for the *Utopieverbot*, which can, to a large extent, be perceived as a continuation of one of Marx's own arguments against the very possibility of utopian thinking. However, the actual reasons that Adorno provides for why utopian thinking is impossible differ significantly from those I have reconstructed from Marx's theories. This is one reason why Adorno's *Utopieverbot* cannot be fully grasped in terms of influences that Marx exerted on Adorno. Nor can the *Utopieverbot* be explicated in terms of the Jewish *Bilderverbot*. As I contend in this chapter, these are two interpretations that have prevailed in the scholarship. I argue that in order to fully understand the origins and the meaning of the *Utopieverbot*, additional aspects of Adorno's philosophy need to be examined. The

¹⁶³ Adorno, 'Vernunft und Offenbarung', *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft*, GS, Vol. 10, pp. 608-16 (p. 616).

¹⁶⁴ Max Horkheimer, 'Auf das Andere Hoffen', *Der Spiegel*, 5 January 1970, p. 81.

second half of this chapter is devoted to Adorno's conception of time, and to his ideas of the culture industry and identity thinking.

From the *Bilderverbot* to the *Utopieverbot*

If the *Utopieverbot* is merely a copy, a reproduction, or a slight permutation of the *Bilderverbot* — one is posited in theological terms, prohibiting the depiction of the divine, of God; the other is a secular claim, forbidding the depiction of a utopian society — then the underlying rationale, the reasons why Adorno considered the *Utopieverbot* to be a good idea, must lie in Judaism. These rationales of the *Bilderverbot* are, however, complex and highly ambiguous, just as is the *Bilderverbot* itself. In contrast to the image of the *Bilderverbot* that the Critical Theorists present us with, namely of the *Bilderverbot* as a single, easily interpretable statement, which is spelled out somewhere in the Hebrew Bible, this stricture in fact encompasses a set of diverse, often incompatible statements. Alongside the most widely cited in reference to the *Bilderverbot* — the Ten Commandments — the Bible contains at least five further allusions to it, each of which is phrased, and can thus be interpreted, slightly differently. For instance, the three references included in the book of Exodus proclaim respectively:

You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below;¹⁶⁵

Do not make any gods to be alongside me; do not make for yourself gods of silver or gods of gold;¹⁶⁶

Do not make cast idols.¹⁶⁷

Contrary to the understanding of the *Bilderverbot* we obtain from Critical Theory, in none of these excerpts from the Bible is it actually God itself that is the object of

¹⁶⁵ Exodus 20. 4.

¹⁶⁶ Exodus 20. 23.

¹⁶⁷ Exodus 34. 17.

prohibition. What is prohibited to be depicted are, rather, idols and gods in general, that is other deities than the Jewish God (Yahweh). The idea of an idol itself is complex. Besides corresponding simply to an object that simply *represents* the divine, the word idol refers also to an object that is *by virtue* of this representation accorded with a certain value, a status of worship. Such a reading of an idol would then imply that the *Bilderverbot* forbids not so much, or, at least, not only the mere depiction of the divine, but rather a certain kind of worship. These different formulations of the *Bilderverbot* also differ in the kind of representation they ban. Whereas the first one seems to ban any conceivable kind of representation: visual (e.g. pictures, icons, portrayals, sculptures, frescoes, engravings, illustrations, woodcuts), and phonetic or conceptual (e.g. name, discursive description), the other two talk much more narrowly about metal sculptures ('gods of silver or gods of gold', 'cast idols').

The Torah itself offers no explicit argument for the *Bilderverbot*. Theological scholarship has, however, in turn advanced a long list of explanations, two of which seem to bear some relevance to the *Utopieverbot*. The most straightforward response to why God should not be depicted is that God is an *invisible*, non-corporeal, non-theophanous being.¹⁶⁸ The depiction is disallowed not so much because humans would lack the cognitive capacity to perceive it, but more due to God's inherent nature (being invisible). The other widely held reading of the *Bilderverbot*, influenced by the revisionism of Moses Maimonides, a prominent medieval rabbi, posits God's *unknowability* as the reason against its depiction.¹⁶⁹ The unknown nature of God is here, unlike its innate invisibility, not simply hypothesised, but grounded in view of God as a 'not completed' being. As Eric Fromm, a Critical Theorist with a particular interest in Jewish thought, elaborates:

[God's] being is not completed like that of a thing, but is a living process, a becoming; only a thing, that is, that which has reached its final form, can

¹⁶⁸ Jacques Ellul, *The Humiliation of the Word* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1985), p. 115.

¹⁶⁹ Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).

have a name. [...] Only idols have names, because they are things. The 'living' God cannot have a name.¹⁷⁰

There are, in fact, palpable parallels between these two rationalisations of the *Bilderverbot* (the invisibility and unknowability of God) and some of Adorno's remarks. Just as there is a dimension to God which renders its depiction impossible, so there appears to be the case with Adorno's understanding of utopia. In the *Negative Dialektik* he claims that philosophy is essentially concerned with thinking 'the ineffable of utopia', namely that which is intrinsically beyond the grasp of our senses.¹⁷¹ He moreover uses the term 'the unsayable', which I take to be synonymous with the former Latinate word.¹⁷² Similarly to the way in which Judaism argues that God, as becoming, cannot be expressed by passivity of words and concepts, Adorno too opposes the description of different aspects of a utopian society, such as freedom, contending that such a description entails an impermissible reduction of a utopia:

Als Möglichkeit des Subjekts ist der intelligiblen Character wie die Freiheit ein Werdendes, kein Seiendes. Es wäre verraten, sobald er dem Seienden durch Deskription, auch die vorsichtigste, einverleibt würde.¹⁷³

Whereas these remarks do resonate with the two explanations of the *Bilderverbot*, explaining the *Utopieverbot* only with reference to Judaism remains deeply problematic, and for six reasons. First, Adorno was not a believing (nor a practising) Jew. Like many other members of the Institute in Frankfurt, like Horkheimer, Lowenthal and Pollock, Adorno was of Jewish background and grew up in a Jewish community.¹⁷⁴ In comparison with his colleagues, however, Adorno did not engage with Judaism and did not have a positive Jewish identity.¹⁷⁵ Whereas it is thus reasonable to acknowledge the ideas of Judaism as an influence on Adorno, it is questionable that he would have simply accepted them. Second, theological

¹⁷⁰ Erich Fromm, *You shall be as gods: a radical interpretation of the Old Testament and its tradition* (London: Cape, 1967), p. 31.

¹⁷¹ Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, p. 22.

¹⁷² Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 287.

¹⁷³ Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, pp. 293–94.

¹⁷⁴ See Jacobs, *The Frankfurt School, Jewish Lives, and Antisemitism*, p. 13.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

scholarship has raised substantial objections with respect to the validity of the view of God as an invisible or unknown being. In a high point of the *Heilsgeschichte*, namely the revelation of the Torah at Mount Sinai, God was held to have shown itself to Israelites: ‘And Moses and Aaron, Nadav, Avihu and the seventy elders went up. And they saw the God of Israel [...]’¹⁷⁶ Third, as Fromm suggests, any argument for the *Bilderverbot* should be suspect because of the political role this prohibition is likely to have played in the spread of Judaism.¹⁷⁷ Fourth, as Albert Wellmer notes, we will never be able to establish with certainty ‘whether or not the Jewish taboo was actually causal or merely a *post facto* rationalisation’ of the *Utopieverbot*. Fifth, as I demonstrated in the discussion above, the term *Bilderverbot* is merely a convenient epithet for an ambiguously interpretable web of assertions encoded in the Hebrew Bible, and a large degree of speculation is necessary to ascertain which reading the Critical Theorists followed. And, last, the spheres of the representation to which the respective prohibitions apply are distinct: whereas the *Utopieverbot* applies above all to the conceptual or discursive sphere, the *Bilderverbot* applies almost exclusively to visual arts. The *Utopieverbot* prohibits expressions of the perfected future society in the forms of concepts, discourse, or words. By contrast, the *Bilderverbot* prohibits the depiction of God in the form of icons, illustrations, sculptures or pictures. Apart from the prohibition imposed on pronouncing the name of God, which is not respected in the Hebrew Bible anyway — God is actually given a name, namely Yahweh or YHWH — it does not in any way outlaw worshipping God through conceptual representation. In fact, the Critical Theorists held an opposed view to the Bible about the ability of visual arts to portray the ideal. Relative to conceptual language they perceived visual arts (together with music and architecture) to possess potentially more legitimate means to express a utopian society.

Marx’s influence on the *Utopieverbot*

In light of these issues, I contend that it is necessary to explicate the rationale of Adorno’s *Utopieverbot* in other terms than by how it relates to the Jewish ban. And

¹⁷⁶ Exodus 24. 7-11.

¹⁷⁷ Fromm, p. 42.

Adorno does indeed acknowledge an alternative set of ideas that have influenced him in this respect — those of Hegel and Marx. Here Adorno does not speak specifically of utopian thinking, but of positive thinking in general. However, since I am interested in utopian thinking as a type of positive thinking, these more general arguments are pertinent. Adorno claims that his aversion to positive thinking indeed stems from Marx and Hegel: 'If anything has penetrated my flesh and blood from Hegel and those who put him on his feet, it is the ascetic stance regarding the unmediated expression of the positive'.¹⁷⁸ Similarly, in his commentary on the poems of Friedrich Hölderlin, Adorno observes that the Romantic poet too is reluctant to positively describe the future, and further, that he shares this trait with Hegel and Marx:

Vorwärts nicht: unter dem Gesetz des Gegenwärtigen, bei Hölderlin dem der Dichtung, mit einem Tabu gegen die abstrakte Utopie, in dem das theologische Bilderverbot nachlebt und das Hölderlin teilt mit Hegel und Marx.¹⁷⁹

Adorno, however, himself recognises that his *Utopieverbot* is not simply an extension of Marx's. In an address to the German sociologists' association in 1968, entitled 'Spätkapitalismus oder Industriegesellschaft?', Adorno highlights the inapplicability of one of Marx's objections to utopian thinking in the contemporary context:

Meine Damen und Herren, lassen Sie mich noch ein paar Worte sagen über die Kategorie der Utopie. Auch sie unterliegt einer historischen Dynamik. Ich sehe von der Marxschen Problematik des Kampfes gegen den anarchistischen Utopismus im Augenblick einmal ab. Aber die Produktivkräfte, die materiellen Produktivkräfte haben sich heute derart entwickelt, daß bei einer rationalen Einrichtung der Gesellschaft die materielle Not nicht mehr nötig wäre. Daß ein solcher Zustand, und zwar auf

¹⁷⁸ Adorno, 'Adorno an Mann, 1. Dezember 1952' in *Theodor W. Adorno, Thomas Mann: Briefwechsel*, Vol. 4, 1943-55, ed. by Christoph Gödde und Thomas Sprecher (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002), pp. 125-30 (p. 128)

¹⁷⁹ Adorno, 'Parataxis, Zur späten Lyrik Hölderlins', *Noten zur Literatur*, GS, Vol. 11, pp. 447-94 (p. 483).

der ganzen Erde, in tellurischem Maßstab sich herstellen ließe, das wäre im neunzehnten Jahrhundert als kraß utopistisch verfemt worden; noch in dem Beispiel von dem Kaviar und den Heringen schwang etwas davon mit. Dadurch, daß die objektiven Möglichkeiten so unendlich erweitert sind, besitzt jedenfalls die Art Kritik am Utopiebegriff, die an der Perpetuierung des Mangels orientiert war, eigentlich keine Aktualität mehr.¹⁸⁰

Here Adorno observes that Marx's critique of utopian thinking was founded on the premise that, in the nineteenth century, the material conditions were not yet 'ripe' for a communist society: that is, the existing levels of economic production were yet too low to meet the basic needs of the entire population. This state of affairs, however, Adorno notes, no longer holds: the objective possibilities have been boundlessly extended, and material hardship is no longer necessary. In the radio conversation with Bloch, again, Adorno touches on the relation between the existing historical conditions and utopian thinking. He notes that the critical factor determining the possibility to envisage a utopian society lies in the existing 'proximity of utopia'.¹⁸¹ This proximity is one reason why Adorno concludes the above address by declaring Marx's own critique of utopian thinking to be no longer relevant. Many ideals which were by Marx's time simply impossible could now have been realised. Critical Theorists consider that, as Raymond Geuss pointedly puts it, 'even if we do not (yet) have talking horses, we do have a socioeconomic formation that is sufficiently productive [...] not to require gross social inequality'.¹⁸²

As demonstrated in the preceding chapter, Marx's critique of utopian thinking consists of more layers than Adorno seems to implicate above. It is thus unwarranted to understand Adorno to be on the whole dismissing the relevance of Marx's critique of utopian thinking for the world as it existed in the latter half of the twentieth century. Similarly, we should not understand Adorno to be dismissing any influence that Marx might have on his own arguments against utopian thinking. In fact, as I show below, Adorno's critique, just like Marx's, is grounded on the idea of

¹⁸⁰ Adorno, 'Diskussionsbeitrag zu "Spätkapitalismus oder Industriegesellschaft"', *Soziologische Schriften I*, GS, Vol. 8, pp. 579-87 (p. 585).

¹⁸¹ Adorno in Bloch, 'Etwas Fehlt', *Tendenz-Latenz-Utopie*, p. 353.

¹⁸² Geuss, 'Dialectics and the revolutionary impulse', in *Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory*, ed. by Rush, p. 132.

the impossibility of utopian thinking. Furthermore, this aspect of Adorno's critique of utopian thinking, which is related to his understanding of positive thinking, was certainly strongly influenced by Marx, in particular by the arguments Marx engendered from his materialist standpoint.

Yet, in the quoted passage from his public address, Adorno clearly does dismiss one particular aspect of Marx's objection to utopian thinking. This dismissal, however, has not weakened Adorno's conviction in the ban on utopian thinking. Compared to Marx, Adorno was not only more general in his insistence on the *Utopieverbot* than Marx was, but also strictly adhered to it in practice. It is therefore plausible to think that Adorno's opposition to utopian thinking has sources other than in the Marxian legacy, sources that strengthened his opposition.

There are two other reasons which further reinforce the need to explicate Adorno's *Utopieverbot* in its own terms, and not only in relation to Marx's ideas. Adorno's dismissal of Marx's critique of utopian thinking is founded not only, as he explicitly posits above, on the changed historical circumstances, but also on his rejection of Marx's understanding of history as being primarily an objective process. Since the increased material wealth was not accompanied by the proletarian revolution that Marx predicted, the Critical Theorists in the 1920s deemed Marx's philosophy of history to be flawed. As I have alluded to in the Introduction, this rejection, which Adorno shared with other Critical Theorists of the time, was an important contributing factor to the emergence of a distinct strand of Marxism in the first place. In my Introduction, I argued that this rejection played a substantial role in making the question of utopian thinking more weighty for the Critical Theorists than for Marx himself. Here I highlight yet one more repercussion of Marx's objective conception of history and Adorno's rejection of it. In that it was specifically this objective conception of history which served as an underlying rationale of Marx's critique of utopian thinking, we cannot simply perceive Adorno's *Utopieverbot* to be identical with, or an extension of, Marx's one.

As I have shown in the previous chapter, if we attempt to make sense of Marx's inconsistent opposition to utopian thinking, one possible approach is to distinguish between more and less detailed utopian thinking. We can then say that Marx's concerns lay primarily with the more detailed type, especially in the instances

where, in Marx's estimation, the utopian outlines were not complemented adequately with a critique of the existing society. Adorno's *Utopieverbot* is in comparison much more overarching — Adorno bans both more and less detailed kinds of utopian thinking. Adorno does distinguish Marx from those socialists and communists who were more in favour of utopian thinking — Adorno refers to this strand of utopian thinking as 'anarchistic utopianism' — and acknowledges Marx's reluctance to engage in such practice.¹⁸³ Adorno notes that Marx was sparing with words when describing a communist society.¹⁸⁴ Yet he also reprehends Marx for the descriptions of communism he includes in his writings, however sparing Marx might be with them. Adorno argues that Marx commits the very fallacy of which he accuses the authors of the 'Gotha Programme', namely of transferring the principles of the existing society into the tenets of the future one. In the 'Critique of the Gotha Programme' Marx notes that the alternative remuneration scheme proposed by the SAPD itself embodies the capitalist principles of commodity exchange and of commodification of labour. In a similar vein, Adorno recognises that Marx's philosophy is premised on another capitalist tenet, that of 'the programme of absolute domination of nature'.¹⁸⁵ Adorno not only perceives the idea of the absolute control of nature to be constitutive of Marx's vision of communism, and moreover denounces Marx for it, but also identifies the source of the ability to construct such a fallacious statement. This is Adorno's idea of identity thinking, which he describes as 'the effort to take things unlike the subject and make them like the subject'.¹⁸⁶ I contend that this idea of identity thinking presents one important rationale of Adorno's *Utopieverbot*, which, even if not incongruent with Marx's materialist objection against utopian thinking, needs to be examined separately. Unlike materialism in the case of Marx, Adorno's argument about identity thinking is paralleled by the absence of positive thinking in his thought, and thus also of positive conceptualisations of utopia. This rationale is, as it is probably becoming evident, quite difficult to grasp, and prior to examining it further, I first outline two further ones, which I call 'Messianic future' and 'culture industry'.

¹⁸³ Adorno, 'Spätkapitalismus oder Industriegesellschaft', *Soziologische Schriften I*, p. 585.

¹⁸⁴ Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, p. 192

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

The removal of utopia into the messianic future

The first rationale of Adorno's *Utopieverbote* I propose here is associated with Adorno's messianism, in particular with his conception of the future as messianic. To grasp this rationale it will be helpful to return to a few arguments elaborated in the previous chapter. Marx's philosophy of history renders utopian thinking unnecessary to the realisation of communism. Whereas Marx can be criticised for this point from an external perspective, it is consistent with the rest of his theoretical framework. Marx was, however, inconsistent with respect to the possibility of utopian thinking: on the one hand he contends that utopian societies cannot be envisaged prior to their realisation, and on the other, he himself envisions certain, economic dimensions of his kind of the communist society. Although this inconsistency cannot be fully resolved, one way to overcome it, at least partially, brings us back to his philosophy of history. According to this philosophy, history possesses a structure, goal and meaning. Even if one does not accept the strictly determinist reading of historical change, for Marx, this change can be divided into stages or phases which evolve from each other with some inevitability, and culminate in the final stage of communism. Marx's philosophy is bound up with notions of progress and teleology, as well as with a historiographical approach that Kant called universal history.¹⁸⁷ Universal history, for Kant, is historiography that, instead of accumulating and explaining facts about individual events, endeavours to discern their underlying trends.¹⁸⁸ It seems to me that this notion has substantial epistemological implications. If one contends that history possesses general trends, structures or even natural laws, then one at least in principle allows for the possibility of discerning or knowing these structures and laws. In Marx's view these laws exist at the economic level, and he was accordingly able to provide some substance to these laws. Adorno's view was very different. He dispensed with all generalised, abstract and universalizing, as well as with all progressive and teleological, conceptions of history. I suggest that this rejection further delimits, if

¹⁸⁷ Immanuel Kant, 'Idea For A Universal History With A Cosmopolitan Purpose', in *Political Writings/Kant*, ed. by Hans Reiss; trans. by H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 41–53.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

not eliminates, the possibility to know the future, to foresee what a utopian society would look like.

The specific reason why Adorno finds universal histories problematic is their implicit search for meaning.¹⁸⁹ That is, in an attempt to interpret history as something more than merely sequences of unrelated and related events, universal histories posit all individual events as tightly linked to each other, and thus as forming a larger picture — the picture of meaning. This meaning takes the form of a purpose, an objective or a goal of history, which Marx perceived in the forthcoming communist society, and in the movement towards this goal. Adorno, however, turns against this approach, asserting that ‘it is not enough for us to live in hope that the history of mankind will move towards a satisfactory state of affairs of its own accord’.¹⁹⁰

Adorno argues that Marx’s account of history, as one instance of the universal history, was discredited not only by the absent or failed proletarian revolutions but, furthermore, by the human atrocities which occurred before and during the Second World War: ‘that very fact, the very assertion that, as people put it, the world has a meaning, can simply not be maintained in the light of all that we have experienced in our own epoch of history’.¹⁹¹ Adorno often refers to these atrocities by using the term ‘Auschwitz’, contending that if there was any truth to these supposedly meaningful accounts of history, ‘Auschwitz could not have happened’.¹⁹² Adorno further contends that under no circumstances can Auschwitz be understood as progress, as contributing to it, directly or indirectly, but solely as regress, as relapses into barbarity and irrationality of the pre-modern epochs.¹⁹³ Even if the philosophy of history as a progressive process does not claim that each and every succeeding moment of history in itself, and thus every event that takes place in this moment, represents a step up in this progressive process, every moment is to be interpreted and thus tolerated as a constitutive part of this process. Adorno deems this to be

¹⁸⁹ Adorno, *Zur Lehre von der Geschichte und der Freiheit* 1964/65, NS, Vol. 13, p. 15.

¹⁹⁰ Adorno, *Vorlesung über Negative Dialektik: Fragmente zur Vorlesung* 1965/66, NS, Vol. 16, p. 76.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

¹⁹² Adorno, *Zur Lehre von der Geschichte und der Freiheit*, p. 14.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

unacceptable: whatever happens in the present can mean either progress or regress (or both), and judging which of the two it is must, in Adorno's view, be approached on its own terms, without consideration of what it could mean in the greater frame of history.

In countering this flaw in Marx's account of history, Adorno develops his own, which, however, is in turn heavily founded on Walter Benjamin's ideas. The relevant question which Adorno poses to himself is 'whether we can construct history without committing the cardinal sin of insinuating meaning where none exists'.¹⁹⁴ That is, the account of history Adorno aims for is one which posits history not as meaningful but as meaningless. But what does it mean for history to be meaningless?

For Benjamin, meaningless history corresponds to a history devoid of an ultimate goal. Benjamin presents this idea most succinctly in his theses 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte'.¹⁹⁵ Although Benjamin adopts Marx's vision of a society free of class division as the most desirable society, he rejects his conception of such society as a point at the end of time. Instead of as a goal of history, Benjamin conceptualises the communist utopia as its 'interruption'.¹⁹⁶ An interruption generally means an interference or a disturbance, an action on a certain state or process which is enacted from without, from a dimension external to it. In Benjamin's usage of the term, the dimension that is external to the process he is concerned with, namely history, is the dimension of 'messianic time'.¹⁹⁷ It is this messianic time, a domain interpreted by Werner Hamacher as being independent of our conventional time, of the 'past', 'present', and 'future', in which Benjamin situates the communist

¹⁹⁴ Adorno, *Zur Lehre von der Geschichte und der Freiheit*, p. 16.

¹⁹⁵ As it is well known, there exist different versions of this text. Benjamin revised his original manuscript numerous and added to it many notes. The quotations below are taken not from the most often published version of this text, but from one of the revised versions. For the most often published version see Walter Benjamin, 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte' in *Walter Benjamin Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 1, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), pp. 691-706. For the revised versions, and Benjamin's as well as editors notes, see Benjamin, 'Anmerkungen zu 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte'', *Walter Benjamin Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 1, pp. 1223-70.

¹⁹⁶ Benjamin, 'Anmerkungen zu 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte'', p. 1231.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

utopia.¹⁹⁸ This means that while utopia already exists in the present moment, it does so in the moment of a time which we cannot access. Irrespective of its inaccessibility, Benjamin sees this interruption as having ‘frequently miscarried’, meaning that so far history has already been interrupted, although not completely successfully: utopia has already burst from the messianic domain and showed up in ours, but not in its fullness.¹⁹⁹

Benjamin’s conception of utopia as existing in the domain of the messianic time accords neatly with Adorno’s final aphorism in *Minima Moralia* in which he posits ‘the standpoint of redemption’ — by which he means the redeemed, that is, the utopian world — as being removed from the ‘scope of existence’.²⁰⁰ Adorno’s own philosophy can thus also be interpreted as featuring this conception of utopia existing in the domain of messianic time, if only implicitly. This interpretation helps us to see how Adorno strengthens Marx’s view of the impossibility of conceiving of utopia in advance of its realisation. Hypothetically speaking, we could foresee Marx’s future by travelling forward in time, by fast forwarding the hands on the clock. But in order to arrive at Adorno’s future, we would need a different method of time travelling altogether, a method that is difficult to conceive of. Adorno did not, of course, elaborate on the location of this future, nor on the means of how to reach it. Along the dimension of time Adorno completely erased any connection between the now and the future, thus preventing us from having any cognitive access to the latter. This connection is further dismantled by the absence of the figure of the messiah in Adorno’s messianic philosophy. In Jewish messianism the messiah acts as mediator, as a carrier, thus linking the ‘Kingdom of God’ to the earthly one. Adorno, however, robs us of even this fictional construction which helps us to imagine or to think the content of utopia, thereby making knowledge of it seem like a total impossibility.

Messianic time can be understood not only as an alternative domain which already exists, although independently of us, as for example, in a parallel universe; it can also be understood as a time which will only arrive with the emergence of utopia.

¹⁹⁸ Werner Hamacher, ‘The Messianic Not’, in *Messianic thought outside theology*, ed. by Anna Glazova and Paul North (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), pp. 221-34.

¹⁹⁹ Benjamin, ‘Anmerkungen zu ‘Über den Begriff der Geschichte’’, p. 1231.

²⁰⁰ Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 281.

For Hamacher sees ‘the discourse of messianic time’ as that of ‘another time’, as one ‘which brings with it not merely another future but another futurity, not only another present but another presence, and which brings with it another time, another temporality — and perhaps, something other than temporality’.²⁰¹ Through this conception Hamacher proposes that time somehow runs differently in utopia. But the idea that time runs differently somewhere else, that is, that the clocks located in utopia would record a different lapse of time than clocks in the existing world, is hard to grasp. Our experiences inform us of how time can run differently depending on what we do, and the science of time can run differently depending on the location from where it is measured. However, the idea of objective time, of clocks ticking at the same rate always and everywhere, is one of those certainties we find difficult to relinquish, and which Marx did not let go of. Marx’s utopia does differ from the present in terms of the relationships between people, of the individual to herself and to objects. The conception of time, however, remains that of the existing present. In Marx’s utopia there might be another human being — the species-being — but there is no other time. In Adorno’s future, by contrast, there is another time. Given that our understanding of time presents such a fundamental category of our relation to the world, how can we know, or even conceive of, our relation to the world which features this other time?

Culture industry and utopian consciousness

The events in the first half of the twentieth century did not initiate only a revision of Marx’s philosophy of history away from its progressivist tenets, but also of his version of materialism. More specifically, the failed and missed communist revolutions spurred doubts about the larger significance that Marx ascribed to the economic basis of a society relative to its ideological superstructure. The question that the Critical Theorists came to face in this respect was why the (unnecessary) material deprivations of the working class had not translated into revolutionary actions. Their answer, substantially influenced by Georg Lukács’s *Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein*, was that Marx had neglected the superstructure, that is,

²⁰¹ Hamacher, ‘The Messianic Not’, in *Messianic thought outside theology*, ed. by Glazova and North, p. 223.

consciousness, culture, and ideology as a potential arena of political struggle, and in turn, that the power of the ruling class resided not simply in their material wealth, their ownership of the means of production, but in their ability to control the worldviews, imagination and consciousness of workers. In Critical Theory, human consciousness is understood as a realm that is partially independent of the existing material conditions, possessing its own mechanisms, and initiating its own values and beliefs.

In that consciousness was a partially autonomous sphere for the Critical Theorists, in principle they opened up a possibility to conceive of ideas and values that would be incongruous with, opposed or subversive to the prevailing ones. In other words, they recognised the possibility of the emergence of new thoughts and beliefs prior to the manifestation of a different economic basis, or more generally a different material reality. In that utopian ideas are also supposed to be *new* ideas, we might say that the Critical Theorists allowed for the possibility of utopian thinking. However, for Adorno this is mainly a theoretical possibility. What might in the first instance seem to overturn Marx's materialist argument against the possibility of utopian thinking, on further investigation actually reinforces it. Under the conditions of an advanced, commercialised stage of capitalism, individuals are, in Adorno's view, basically unable to conceptualise these new ideas. The root of the cause lies in the increased material wealth of late capitalist societies and the new technologies responsible for this increase. Whereas Adorno, on the one hand, sees this technological progress as making the realisation of a utopian society possible, on the other hand he understands it as a factor preventing individuals from grasping this possibility in the first place. In his radio conversation with Bloch, Adorno speaks of the 'proximity of utopia' as a cause for the 'shrinking of utopian consciousness' and for inhibiting 'the capacity to imagine the totality as something that could be completely different'.²⁰² To better understand what, according to Adorno, prevented individuals from conceptualising the new, I respectively discuss i) the sheer power and effectiveness of the propagation of the dominant interests, ideas and beliefs, a late capitalist phenomenon for which Adorno and Horkheimer coined the term

²⁰² Adorno in Bloch, 'Etwas Fehlt', *Tendenz-Latenz-Utopie*, pp. 352-53.

‘culture industry’ (‘Kulturindustrie’); and ii) identity thinking as the prevailing mode of conceptual language.

‘Kulturindustrie’, a title of one chapter in Adorno and Horkheimer’s *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, describes the culture which, in their view, characterises late capitalist society — the culture of mass-produced standardised films, radio programmes and magazines. For Adorno and Horkheimer, the spread of commodification from consumption goods into the sphere of culture occurred only recently and is the most critical characteristic of late capitalist culture. For the ‘uniformity’ of this late capitalist culture, Adorno and Horkheimer blame technology and the embeddedness of its production in the capitalist system.²⁰³ Various practices halted the development and expression of creative oppositional ideas. The homogeneity of ideas is ensured through ‘social machinery’.²⁰⁴ Adorno and Horkheimer refer to ‘the censors voluntarily maintained by the film factories’ and their ‘counterparts in all other departments’.²⁰⁵ For example, in the case of the writing and publication of books, they present control and censorship as absolutely effective:

der Prozeß, dem ein literarischer Text, wenn nicht in automatischer Vorausschau seines Herstellers, so jedenfalls durch den Stab von Lektoren, Herausgebern, Umarbeitern, ghost writers in- und außerhalb der Verlagsbüros unterworfen wird, überbietet an Gründlichkeit noch jede Zensur. Deren Funktionen vollends überflüssig zu machen, scheint trotz aller wohltätigen Reformen der Ehrgeiz des Erziehungssystems zu sein.²⁰⁶

The central flaw of the culture industry lies not so much in the homogeneity of the ideas, values and beliefs it propagates, but in its conformity with ‘the economic system’, and moreover in that it forces individuals to participate themselves in this control of their consciousness: ‘Everyone must show that they identify wholeheartedly with the power which beats them’.²⁰⁷ Herbert Marcuse clarifies further this thesis of the interpellation of individuals by the existing system, or, in

²⁰³ Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, GS, Vol. 3, p. 141.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 12-13.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 13.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 161; 176.

the words of Adorno and Horkheimer themselves, of 'the cycle' formed between 'manipulation and retroactive need'.²⁰⁸ In Marcuse's analysis of the capitalist society, *One Dimensional Man*, he posits that the system's control of the consciousness of individuals does not operate through ideas and beliefs alone, but also through the control of their needs or desires.²⁰⁹ It is not only that the workers believe in the supposed freedoms and inevitabilities of certain social constructions, like the levels of material inequalities, but that they need, want and desire the commodities, and the type of entertainment and social interactions that capitalism provides for them. This means that the capitalist system is itself generative of these needs and desires, which in turn, through their expression and demand to be gratified, reproduce its normative tenets. In *An Essay on Liberation*, Marcuse writes of 'second nature' to describe the internalisation of social pressures and desires by individuals to such an extent that they will malfunction physically if these pressures and desires are not fulfilled.²¹⁰ This second nature is, in the view of Critical Theorists, the most powerful mechanism for conserving the existing normativity and for inhibiting its transformation. As Adorno and Horkheimer contend:

Unbeirrbar bestehen sie auf der Ideologie, durch die man sie versklavt. Die böse Liebe des Volks zu dem, was man ihm antut, eilt der Klugheit der Instanzen noch voraus.²¹¹

The problem with identity thinking

In addition to the institutional mechanisms of cultural production and their internalisation by individuals, Adorno perceives that the mode of nature of the prevailing conceptual thought itself hinders any articulation of a utopian society. That is, the obstacles to utopian thinking lie not only in practices external to, but also in those internal to, the conceptual language. He observes that:

²⁰⁸ Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, p. 142.

²⁰⁹ Herbert Marcuse, *One dimensional man: studies in the ideology of advanced industrial society* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), p. xv.

²¹⁰ Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (London: Allen Lane, 1969), pp. 10-11.

²¹¹ Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, p. 155.

es gehört zum heillosen Zustand, daß auch der ehrlichste Reformers, der in abgegriffener Sprache die Neuerung empfiehlt, durch Übernahme des eingeschliffenen Kategorienapparats und der dahinter stehenden schlechten Philosophie die Macht des Bestehenden verstärkt, die er brechen möchte.²¹²

Under the phrase of the 'eingeschliffenen Kategorienapparats und der dahinter stehenden schlechten Philosophie', Adorno subsumes a set of practices and premises associated with that which Adorno elsewhere calls identity thinking. Identity thinking is a term Adorno uses to describe positive or affirmative conceptual language which *identifies* or equates the subject of a sentence with its predicate or the object. I have, however, not yet sufficiently emphasised that for Adorno this form of language is fundamentally counterproductive when it comes to expressing utopian ideas. Adorno denounces identity thinking because it ensures that any attempt to conceptualise a properly different society is doomed: all that can be conceptualised are false utopias, copies of the existing society.

Adorno's opposition to identity thinking is partially derived from Hegel. Hegel rejects the view that formal definitions of concepts or terms in question are an overwhelmingly important philosophical virtue, and in fact he considers them impossible. This rejection is grounded in his idea that the essence of a term — as a timeless, historically invariant meaning — cannot be isolated from its contingent associations, superficial appearances and accidental accretions — meanings that ultimately depend on the existing historical context. For Hegel, the basic unit is not an individual term with a fixed meaning, but rather a larger unit, the argument. A philosophical argument is essentially one in which the meaning of the central terms in question shifts during the course of the discussion; a good argument is one in which the semantic content of the basic concept involved changes in a structured way. Eventually, a definition of the central terms will be revealed in the course of the discussion: not as its final result or outcome, but in the course of its process as its pattern, the steps of argumentative progression. The definition of a concept as a process can, however, never be fully captured by a single linguistic formulation. The philosophical argument is what Hegel calls a totality, and although this totality is

²¹² Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, p. 14.

multifaceted, and formed of different elements, these facets or elements can never be isolated from it without their being transformed into something that they are not while still located within the totality.²¹³ Although Hegel's view applies primarily to philosophical language, and less to the more 'everyday' language employed in other areas of human life, what he says in his *Science of Logic* about 'a rose' nevertheless helpfully illuminates his argument:

To say 'This rose is red' involves (in virtue of the copula 'is') the coincidence of the subject and predicate. The rose however is a concrete thing, and so not red only: it also has an odour, a specific form, and many other features not implied in the predicate red.²¹⁴

Hegel's point is that by describing a rose as a red object one arbitrarily excludes other senses of what a rose is, and thus does not represent it truthfully. Adorno made a very similar observation with respect to the concept of utopia. To the question of 'what is then the content of utopias?' Adorno responded with the following words:

Es gehört zum Begriff der Utopie wesentlich dazu, daß sie nicht darin besteht, daß sich eine bestimmte einzelne herausgegriffene Kategorie verändert, von der aus sich alles konstruiert, zum Beispiel, indem man die Kategorie des Glücks allein als Schlüssel der Utopie annimmt.²¹⁵

That is, Adorno opposes not only explications of what could be plausibly thought as significant constituents of a utopian society, such as freedom or happiness. He objects to the very identification of these concepts, or, in fact, any other, as fundamental elements of a utopian society. He refuses to say what utopia *is* because that in itself would limit the utopian potential.

²¹³ Cf. Geuss, 'Dialectics and the revolutionary impulse', in *Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory*, ed. by Rush, pp. 123-24.

²¹⁴ G. W. F. Hegel, *Logic*, tr. by William Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 237.

²¹⁵ Adorno in Bloch, 'Etwas Fehlt', *Tendenz-Latenz-Utopie*, pp. 353, 357.

Adorno's rationale of this objection in part corresponds to Hegel's own concerns about identity thinking. Adorno, however, also strengthens this objection with two further considerations he adds to the Hegelian legacy outlined above. One is his diagnosis of the contemporary society, explicated most concisely in his *Minima Moralia* as a society that is profoundly and extensively wrong. He diagnoses the whole society as false, and subsequently each and every value, practice or idea manifested in this society: 'There is no right life in the wrong one'.²¹⁶ This means that Adorno preempts what, in Hegel, was a central impediment to identity thinking: namely a lack of criteria at hand to differentiate between what is essential and what is merely part of the immediate circumstances. For Adorno this impediment is of only secondary importance, since society and its conceptual language are tainted in the first place by the currently prevailing irrationality, immorality, falsity, deception, illusion, etc.

The other consideration Adorno adds to Hegel is his own definition of identity thinking. While Adorno might not be saying anything substantially new in this formulation, it clarifies why, in his view, a utopian society cannot be articulated by means of this form of conceptual language. In the *Negative Dialektik*, Adorno draws a contrast between identity thinking and dialectics: whereas dialectics seek to say what something 'is', identity thinking says what something 'comes under, what it exemplifies or represents, and what, accordingly, it is not itself'.²¹⁷ That is, in Adorno's reading, identity thinking functions on the basis of exemplification or representation, of representing a subject through its predicates. Since, for Adorno, all existing predicates are somehow false, or infected with falseness, then the resulting predicated subject will also be a false one.

For Adorno a *true* utopia simply cannot be envisioned, since all the material that is available for its construction is false, and thus any attempt to construct a positive conception of utopia will ensue in a *false* utopia. This view follows from each of the two strands of argumentation I have advanced above in terms of culture industry and identity thinking. I have, moreover, argued that Adorno's philosophy of history

²¹⁶ Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 43.

²¹⁷ Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, p.152.

is incongruent with holding a positive notion of utopia in the present, and that any attempt to comprehend Adorno's reluctance towards utopian thinking needs to take this idea of messianic future into account, together with those of identity thinking and culture industry. Marx's own influence, as well as that of the *Bilderverbot*, does not suffice as an explanation for Adorno's reluctance. In this chapter I have not developed a systematic critique of Adorno's arguments of utopian thinking, but have instead simply elucidated some new understandings of these arguments and elaborated on those that the existing scholarship provides. My exposition of the arguments presented here is, however, yet to turn critical — by adopting Bloch's perspective, which I introduce in the final chapter. For Bloch, Adorno's concept of the culture industry was overly totalising, and he did not consider all ideas, desires, concepts, views, wishes and beliefs to be equally corrupted. Some of them embody *true* utopian content. As Francesca Vidal notes, 'Bloch sees the wishes of shop windows as still conditioned by the demands of the culture industry, but in stories and colportage he recognises these wishes as already oriented against the existing offers of happiness, and moreover, in theatre, most clearly by Brecht, as containing the will towards change'.²¹⁸ Bloch also has an alternative conception of the future which allows for it to be substantiated. The exposition of these points is the objective of the final chapter. Prior to that, however, we need to examine and critically evaluate another very persistent view of the relation between Adorno's philosophy and utopian thinking, which, I argue, has contributed most to cutting it off from Critical Theory.

²¹⁸ Francesca Vidal, 'Hoffnung', in *Bloch-Wörterbuch*, ed. by Dietschy et al., pp. 189-212 (p. 198).

CHAPTER 3

Negative utopia?

In the face of Adorno's *Utopieverbot*, many scholars would dispute the claim that his philosophy is indeed devoid of utopian images: whereas Adorno might hesitate to describe these images positively, he does express them in a different way, in a different kind of language than the traditional terms of identity. Elizabeth Pritchard asserts that Adorno's philosophy 'does provide a glimpse of that which lies beyond the status quo'; similarly, Gerhard Schweppenhäuser contends that his writing 'points always in a single direction: imagining, through a specific negative insight, the overcoming of the prevailing negativity'; and, further, Andreas Bernardi sees it as engendering an 'imaginary refuge of the right life'.²¹⁹ These claims evoke what Axel Honneth once referred to as 'disclosive power' of Adorno's texts, whereby the truth-content that his writing is supposed to disclose is not simply the world as it 'really' is (behind the veil of ideology) but the world that ought to be, that is the right or the good world, the utopian one.²²⁰ In short, the key claim of this strand of Adorno scholarship is that Adorno does provide a picture of utopia, albeit indirectly. The underlying argument is not an obvious one, for instance, that Adorno was inconsistent, that there is a mismatch between his theorising on what Critical Theory sought to become and his actual practice of it. These scholars are all united in suggesting that Adorno both instituted and respected the prohibition against conceptualising the idea of utopia which I called the *Utopieverbot*. They insist, however, on a more nuanced interpretation of Adorno's *Utopieverbot*: while Adorno did reject utopian thinking in its positive or identity form, he at the same time also replaced it with a new, alternative type of representation. In other words, the hitherto existing interpretation recognises the place of utopian thinking in Adorno's

²¹⁹ Elizabeth A. Pritchard, 'Bilderverbot Meets Body in Theodor W. Adorno's Inverse Theology', *Harvard Theological Review*, 95:3 (2002), 291-318 (pp. 302-3); Schweppenhäuser, *Theodor W. Adorno: An introduction*, p. 20; Andreas Bernard, 'Umtausch nicht gestattet', in *"Minima Moralia" neu gelesen*, ed. by Andreas Bernard and Ulrich Raulff (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), pp. 15-20 (p. 17).

²²⁰ Axel Honneth, 'The Possibility of a Disclosing Critique of Society: The *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in Light of Current Debates in Social Criticism', *Constellations*, 7:1 (2000), 116-127.

philosophy primarily as its preservation: in Adorno, utopian thinking is supposed to endure, albeit in a different, novel form.

One of Adorno's alternatives to identity utopian thinking is conceived as a residual or remainder of the positive utopia, as an exception to his general commitment to negativity or criticism. Given the very limited examples of this kind of utopian thinking that have been identified in Adorno's overall corpus, it has nevertheless been accorded with substantial significance as an aspect of his philosophy. Rahel Jaeggi, for instance, emphasises 'the obvious presence of positive images and motifs in *Minima Moralia* as in Adorno's work as a whole'.²²¹ These positive motifs have been cited again and again in the critical literature as if to prove the utopian dimension of Adorno's thinking. Among others, these utopian images have been identified by Raymond Geuss who notes that for the critical theorists 'the only course is relentless criticism of the present', since 'any form of affirmation' was for them 'tantamount to complicity'.²²² Despite this attitude, Geuss continues, 'Adorno does occasionally give a glimpse of his view of what a good life in a fully emancipated society would comprise'.²²³ In *Minima Moralia* Geuss points to three such glimpses of utopia:

daß keiner mehr hungern soll;²²⁴

man ohne Angst verschieden sein kann;²²⁵

Rien faire comme une bête,²²⁶ auf dem Wasser liegen und friedlich in den Himmel schauen, "sein, sonst nichts, ohne alle weitere Bestimmung und Erfüllung".²²⁷

²²¹ Jaeggi, 'Kein Einzelner vermag etwas dagegen', in *Dialektik der Freiheit*, ed. by Honneth, p. 127.

²²² Geuss, 'Dialectics and the revolutionary impulse', in *Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory*, ed. by Rush, p. 135.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 176.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ French for "To do nothing at all like an animal".

²²⁷ Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 177.

Whereas these allusions to a utopia are constituted of, loosely speaking, affirmative or positive statements, Geuss warns, they are not to be ‘read affirmatively’ but ‘dialectally’.²²⁸ By this he means they are not intended to form the constitutional principles of the new society but ‘to *reject* any form of justification of high culture that depends on subjecting people to malnourishment, *Angst*, or forced labour’.²²⁹ Thus, according to this reading, the affirmative character of these utopian images is merely superficial, and is in fact completely in accordance with Adorno’s general negativistic approach. However, even if these specific utopian images are not seen as inconsistent with the others Adorno paints in *Minima Moralia*, or in his other texts, they are differentiated from them. That is, this kind of utopian thinking is presented as one dimension of Adorno that can, at least to a certain degree, be distinguished or separated from other, more strictly negative ones — those which constitute the majority of Adorno’s writings.

However, these utopian statements do not tell the whole story of the supposed utopian thinking embodied in Adorno’s philosophy. Authors such as Pritchard see utopian thinking not merely as a dimension of Adorno’s philosophy but as essentially constitutive of it. In this sense, utopian thinking is then not a residual but rather is central to Adorno. More specifically, it appears that Adorno’s ‘practice of determinate negation’ is the aspect of his philosophy that provides the supposed vision of utopia. One can call determinate negation a methodological principle which Adorno appropriated from Hegel, but to do so would be problematic since it suggests the very separation of content and method that Adorno categorically rejected. As such, this principle will be explored further in the ensuing chapters. For now, though, it should suffice to comprehend the act of determinately negating something, say utopia, first, as *negating* it, that is, positing what utopia ‘is not’, and second, as negating it *determinately*, that is, specifically: not making generalised but instead highly detailed and specific claims on what utopia is not. It is not, however, problematic to postulate determinate negation as Adorno’s primary method: apart from his purely theoretical writings such as *Negative Dialektik* or *Ästhetische Theorie*, which above all consist of reflections on theory itself (including, in *Negative Dialektik*, on the theory of determinate negation), determinate negation is the

²²⁸ Geuss, ‘Dialectics and the revolutionary impulse’, p. 135.

²²⁹ Ibid.

method of Adorno's writings; be it in those on music, literature or society more broadly. Drawing on, above all, two of Adorno's own statements, namely that 'utopia lies essentially in the determinate negation' and that 'the power of determinate' is 'the only allowed cipher of the other', this interpretation thus postulates determinate negation itself as a form of utopian thinking.²³⁰ By 'das Andere' (the Other) Adorno means anything that is fundamentally different from the present, and as such also includes the utopian world. Therein this interpretation contends that determinate negation should not be read only as what utopian society 'is not' or what it 'does not comprise', but also as what it 'is' or what it 'comprises'. In short, Adorno supposedly provides us with glimpses of utopia *through, in, or by* detailed accounts of a non-utopia, negation of utopia, negative utopia. In this vein I call this kind of utopian thinking, identified by scholarship in Adorno's philosophy, 'negative utopian thinking'.

This negative utopian thinking could very plausibly be seen as a weakened version of its identity counterpart. After all, by positing, for example, that a utopian society is designated by the absence of commercialised free time, I merely exclude one of the many possible ways in which a society organises the time of its members. In contrast, by suggesting that in a utopian society individuals would spend at least a part of their days outdoors, I draw up a more specific vision of utopia. It seems more likely that the discrepancy between my image and the image others create upon reading mine will be smaller in the case of a positive image than in the negative one. Such a suggestion coincides with the distinction Kant draws between an 'infinite' and an 'affirmative' judgement.²³¹ For Kant, an infinite judgement — 'in a utopia free time is non-commercialised' — does not clarify the concept of free time or say anything contentful about it; it only takes away one possibility out of an infinite number of possibilities, thereby leaving an infinite number of possibilities as to what free time in utopia might consist of, or be like. In contrast, an affirmative judgement — 'in a utopia some free time is spent outdoors' — says something contentful about the concept of free time, by limiting it to one of the infinite possibilities it could take on. The existing interpretation of negative utopian thinking, however, does not

²³⁰ Adorno, in Bloch 'Etwas fehlt', *Tendenz-Latenz-Utopie*, p. 362; 'Zu einem Porträt Thomas Manns', *Noten zur Literatur*, GS, Vol. 11, pp. 335-44 (p. 341).

²³¹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

adhere to this Kantian distinction, and hence does not conceive negative utopian thinking as an inferior variety relative to the identity thinking one. Adopting Adorno's own view, which he, in turn, adopted from Hegel, that (determinately) negative judgements supply no less content about reality than affirmative ones do, this scholarship sets the two kinds of utopian thinking side by side. In fact, negative utopian thinking is not conceived only as an equal but as a progressive alternative to the positive one.

In general, progress means an improvement from that what has been into that what is. The notion of progress moreover implies a certain mechanism of how this improvement is brought about: the new and the old are bound to each other, the new is not independent of the old but is supposed to be a certain, better reincarnation of the latter. When we talk of a progressive change, we do not think that the old was simply discarded on the whole and the new constructed out of nothing, but instead that only the bad or the false sides of the old were disposed of, while the new was devised from a combination of what was good or right in the old, augmented by something genuinely new. This is especially the case when progress is conceived as a dialectical process: Hegel saw each new phase in history as sublation or overcoming ('Aufhebung') of the old one, thereby explicitly emphasising that the former always contained something of the latter. To suggest that negative utopian thinking is a progressive alternative thus means it has supposedly preserved the valuable features of the earlier kinds of utopian thinking, discarded the bad, and added some new elements. What the new side of negative utopian thinking is is evident — its negativity. The form or the nature in which utopia is given to us is a negative one. What negative utopian thinking supposedly preserves is what we could call the very essence of the previous kinds of utopianism, namely the vision, the picture, the image, the idea of utopia, the answer to the question of what utopia is, what it consists of.

The question that arises immediately, and which is the key question addressed in this chapter, is: how does Adorno preserve the image of 'what utopia *is*' in his images of 'what utopia *is not*'? How do non-utopias at the same time contain utopias? Although all the replies that the existing scholarship on Adorno offer are tightly intertwined with the concept of determinate negation, I suggest they can be placed in three distinct groups: first, positive utopia is always already included in

the negative utopia in that the former represents the point of departure of the latter; second, positive utopia arises in the *process* of determinate negation itself; and third, positive utopia emerges out of a specific assembly of determinately negative statements, an assembly which Adorno came to call ‘a constellation’.

Positive utopia — a point of departure for negative thinking

The idea that a positive conception of utopia is contained in the portrayals of negative utopia as a point of departure, and as a precondition for the explication of the latter, has been advanced by Rahel Jaeggi, as part of her project of rehabilitating critique as a legitimate tool of Critical Theory. Jaeggi’s project, which she set out in full in her habilitation published under the title *Kritik von Lebensformen* (2014), can be interpreted as a response to Habermas’s proceduralist turn.²³² In this intellectual development, Habermas, in the 1970s, displaced any normative theorising, including critique, with theorising that aims only at defining procedures or rules upon which norms can then later be established. Habermas found normative theorising problematic in that, in the course of it, a critical theorist herself presupposes certain norms without ascertaining why these norms should be respected by other members of the society as well. Even if these norms originate purely in a subject (in this case, a theorist), once incorporated into a theory they suddenly assume objective validity. The fear is that such theorising runs the risk of being paternalistic. Habermas thus maintains that both the questions of a utopian society as well of a non-utopian one ought to be refrained from, since these are both questions based on specific normative principles.²³³ Opposing Habermas, Jaeggi insists that questions of negative utopia, i.e. of social critique, can be justified, and thereby returns to Adorno’s own position — one that Habermas in the first place sought to repudiate. In fact, Jaeggi argues not only that normative theorising can be justified, but that it is unavoidable. Invoking Hegel, Jaeggi contends that normativity is imputed in each aspect of the existing society, from the social relations, institutions, and practices, to the attitudes and behaviours of individuals. That means that everything we say, do,

²³² Rahel Jaeggi, *Kritik von Lebensformen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2014).

²³³ See, e.g., Jürgen Habermas, ‘Ein anderer Ausweg aus der Subjektphilosophie: Kommunikative vs. subjektzentrierte Vernunft’, in *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne: zwölf Vorlesungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), pp. 344-89.

know or think always already presupposes certain norms, certain ideas of what the good is, including what the good life is, either implicitly or explicitly.²³⁴ Thus the neutral stance — the one Habermas seemed to have advocated — is in Jaeggi's view simply impossible: one is either for or against the existing society. However, that does not mean that for Jaeggi all kinds of objection to the existing society, that is, all kinds of social critique — in her phrasing, all kinds of 'Kritik von Lebensformen' — are equally good. She distinguishes between three different forms of critique: 'external', 'internal' and 'immanent'.²³⁵ Whereas, in her view, the first form, just as with positive utopian thinking, runs the risk of being paternalistic or even violent, the last effectively overcomes this risk.²³⁶

Jaeggi sees this paradigmatic case of immanent critique in Adorno's *Minima Moralia*, which she discusses in detail in the article "'Kein Einzelner vermag etwas dagegen" Adornos *Minima Moralia* als Kritik von Lebensformen'.²³⁷ According to Jaeggi, Adorno's immanent critique overcomes the risk of paternalism by criticising the existing social form from within; that is, according to its own standards. Since, as I have explained above, Jaeggi contends that each social form must always embody its own specific norms, these norms can then also be assumed by the critique of that social form. The norms underlying critique are thus not purely subjective, and merely imposed by a critical theorist, but are objective in the sense that they already possess a validity that extends beyond the subject, beyond the critical theorist herself. A function of critique in this case is to ascertain whether these norms are in fact attested to, that is, whether they are actually realised in a social form, as opposed to existing purely in an ideal form.²³⁸ As an illustration of this function Jaeggi cites Adorno's discussion of the bourgeois virtues. In Adorno's view, the virtues of 'independence, perseverance, forethought, circumspection' have, in capitalist society, been preserved merely as ideals — that is, individuals still strive to perform them, but cannot actually do so.²³⁹ In Adorno's analysis this is because

²³⁴ Jaeggi, *Kritik von Lebensformen*, pp. 288-9.

²³⁵ Ibid., pp. 261-320.

²³⁶ Ibid., p. 269.

²³⁷ Jaeggi, 'Kein Einzelner vermag etwas dagegen', in *Dialektik der Freiheit*, ed. by Honneth.

²³⁸ Jaeggi, *Kritik von Lebensformen*, pp. 297-8.

²³⁹ Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 37.

the economic conditions of these virtues have fallen away.²⁴⁰ How am I to act independently if I am, in my economic, that is my material existence, always dependent on participating in the labour market, and selling my labour?

But immanent critique does not criticise the existing society simply on the latter's own terms — this form of critique Jaeggi calls internal, and whereas she sees it as non-paternalistic, she contends it runs another kind of risk, that of conservatism.²⁴¹ By relying entirely on the established norms, that is, by treating them as absolute and, as such, as fixed standards, internal critique ultimately contributes also to conservation of the existing society. Immanent critique is, however, for Jaeggi, not only non-paternalistic but the opposite of conservative — it is 'transformative'.²⁴² A reason behind is that immanent critique is based not only on the prevailing norms as they *are*, in their existing form, but also on their possible future form, on what they would *become*. In this vein, Jaeggi draws a comparison between the norms of internal critique as static and of immanent one as dynamic. In Adorno's model of immanent critique, Jaeggi, on the one hand, refers to these dynamic norms as an idea of the right society that is constantly renewing itself.²⁴³ This idea is a very compressed expression of an argument that Jaeggi devises on Hegel's dialectical understanding of history, whereby the new or the renewed continuously emerge from the contradictions inherent in the old. Another way in which Jaeggi invokes the dynamic character of norms in the case of Adorno's immanent critique is more pertinent to our immediate purposes. This is the notion which she refers to as 'a positive idea of a good universal'.²⁴⁴ This positive idea of a good universal is not 'a finished picture of the good, right, or successful life'.²⁴⁵ However, it does contain a notion of 'what utopia is' — even if it is a highly vague one. On Jaeggi's account, this corresponds to 'a way of living together', that is, 'freed from the yoke of necessity and the coldness of instrumental relations, as the unforced unity of differences'.²⁴⁶ Whereas this other, better social form is one that Adorno's analysis ultimately aims

²⁴⁰ Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 37.

²⁴¹ Jaeggi, *Kritik von Lebensformen*, pp. 272-4.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 302-4.

²⁴³ Jaeggi, 'Kein Einzelner vermag etwas dagegen', in *Dialektik der Freiheit*, ed. by Honneth, p. 136.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

at, Jaeggi claims, it is also what his analysis starts with.²⁴⁷ That it, Jaeggi appears to argue that a certain affirmative conception of utopia is present in Adorno's negativism from the very start, as its precondition or point of departure. In this sense, the positive and the negative are never to be perceived as independent of each other — their relationship is rather one of reciprocity. Thereby Jaeggi supplies one explanation of how the positive can be contained in the negative — the central claim we investigate here.

Jaeggi's argument, that the criticism of the existing society presupposes a certain positive image of utopia, is reminiscent of the scholarship that has identified Adorno's philosophy as 'inverse theology'.²⁴⁸ The term 'inverse' applies to the object of concern of this theology: instead of the world of the divine, that is, the good, inverse theology investigates its opposite, its inverse, that is, the false and wrong existing world. What instead distinguishes the inverse theology scholarship is the argument it makes in relation to *how* this falseness or wrongness can be identified, that is, to how certain features of the existing society can actually be determined as false: not from within the existing world, but from its outside, and more specifically from the outside as the utopian world. This argument is derived from one specific maxim of Adorno's found within the concluding aphorism of *Minima Moralia*: 'Perspectives must be fashioned that displace and estrange the world, reveal it to be, with its rifts and crevices, as indigent and distorted as it will appear one day in the messianic light'.²⁴⁹ The term 'messianic light' is here interpreted as 'utopian perspective', and the 'rifts and crevices' as the falseness. The aphorism can thus be read that in order to see the falseness one needs to look at the existing world from the utopian perspective — the view one has when residing in utopia. But since, of

²⁴⁷ Jaeggi, 'Kein Einzelner vermag etwas dagegen', in *Dialektik der Freiheit*, ed. by Honneth, p. 131.

²⁴⁸ Cf. Christopher Craig Brittain, *Adorno and theology* (London; New York: T & T Clark, 2010), pp. 83-113; Pritchard, 'Bilderverbot meets body in Theodor W. Adorno's inverse theology'. Adorno himself also uses this term, e.g., in one of his letters to Benjamin in which he refers to his and Benjamin's work as instances of inverse theology ('Adorno an Benjamin 17 December 1934', *Briefe und Briefwechsel / Theodor W. Adorno, Theodor W. Adorno Walter Benjamin Briefwechsel*, Vol. 2, 1928-1940, ed. Henri Lonitz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995), pp. 90-91). In addition to 'inverse theology' also the concept of 'negative theology' is sometimes used to describe Adorno's philosophy. See Gordon Finlayson, 'On not being silent in the darkness: Adorno's singular apophaticism', *Harvard Theological Review*, 105:1 (2012), 1-32.

²⁴⁹ Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 37.

course, as also Adorno observes, this perspective is out of our reach — ‘it is the utterly impossible’ — one needs instead to feign it, and pretend that one is already in the utopia that has not yet materialised.²⁵⁰ This can conceivably be done by possessing a certain idea of what this utopian society is. What this scholarship thus contends with respect to the place of utopia in Adorno’s philosophy is similar to Jaeggi’s argument, in that a positive conception of utopia is present in Adorno’s philosophy as a prerequisite for exercising the critique of the existing society.

This reciprocity between the positive and the negative was also acknowledged by Adorno himself. In the *Negative Dialektik*, Adorno notes that greyness could not fill us with despair, unless we sustained a concept of a different colour.²⁵¹ In other words: whatever despairing assertions we make about the existing social world, they will always presuppose some kind of a conception of how a better one might look. In this sense, Jaeggi’s argument could be considered only as a restatement of Adorno’s own view. Adorno, however, did not uphold this position on the whole: sometimes he sees the negative conception as strictly preceding the positive one. For instance, in the radio conversation with Bloch, Adorno contends that the negative is possible to know exactly, whereas the same cannot be said for the positive image.²⁵² Similarly, in his lectures on moral philosophy, Adorno states that we cannot know the absolute good or the absolute norm, and also not what the human, humane and humanity are, but that we can know exactly what the inhumane is.²⁵³ Jaeggi does not concede with Adorno on this complete separation of the negative and the positive, and, in that, her view thus cannot be seen simply as a restatement of Adorno’s own. Furthermore, she describes her position in greater detail than Adorno ever does. In particular, Jaeggi elaborates on the source of the positivity, that is, on how we are in the first place to arrive at a conception of a good life, irrespective of the unrefined or unelaborated nature of this conception.

While Jaeggi recognises the positive and the negative sides to utopian thinking as not existing independently of each other, in that one is always already contained in

²⁵⁰ Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 37.

²⁵¹ Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, p. 370.

²⁵² Adorno, in Bloch, ‘Etwas Fehlt’, *Tendenz-Latenz-Utopie*, p. 362.

²⁵³ Adorno, *Probleme der Moralphilosophie*, NS, Vol. 10, p. 261.

the other, she does not see them as one another's sole origins. That is, while she recognises the image of utopia as coexisting with the image of the false world, she does not see the latter as the only source of the former. Instead, she sees the positive conception of utopia developing from 'the inner normativity of historical reality itself'.²⁵⁴ That is, even if Jaeggi insists that Adorno's positive universal does not exist 'in a glass jar' — existing as an already worked out formulation which only needs to become accessible — her argument does assume it as being inherent in reality.²⁵⁵ Even if in a very weak sense, this argument does appeal to a certain teleological conception of history, and could as such be challenged further. What is, however, more relevant to our concerns here is that Jaeggi's explanation of where the positive conception of utopia emerges from is not entirely complete.

This becomes clear if we differentiate between two kinds of positive conceptions of utopia, a distinction that Jaeggi herself implicitly draws. One is the positive image as the starting point of critique, a starting point that is also coexistent with the negative image. Jaeggi describes this kind of positive images as a 'preconception' that is anticipated, and moreover as 'positive counter-images' that are 'necessarily indeterminate and vague'.²⁵⁶ The other kind is the positive image that ensues from, is consequent to the negative images. This is the positive to which Jaeggi refers to as 'the positive' which is 'conveyed only through the views of that which should not be' and similarly, as the one which 'is concretised only via the negative'.²⁵⁷ The central difference between the two kinds of positivity lies in the degree of their determinateness: the former is a vague, unspecific, general conception of a good society — a preconception rather than a conception; the latter is its specific, that is, its determinate, conception. The same distinction cannot be drawn between the negative images. Whereas it might be the case that in each step of the dialectical process each ensuing negative image is more determinate than the previous one,

²⁵⁴ Jaeggi, 'Kein Einzelner vermag etwas dagegen', in *Dialektik der Freiheit*, ed. by Honneth, p. 135. This view is directly disputed by Martin Seel, who argues that Adorno's point of departure are his experiences from childhood. See Seel, *Adornos Philosophie der Kontemplation* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004).

²⁵⁵ Jaeggi, 'Kein Einzelner vermag etwas dagegen', p. 126.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 133-4.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 134. See also Uwe Justus Wenzel, 'Negativistische Ethik?', in *Erfahrungen der Negativität – Festschrift für Michael Theunissen zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. by Markus Hattstein and Michael Theunissen (Hildesheim: Olms, 1992), pp. 355-72 (p. 358).

already the negative image entailed in the very first step is supposed to be determinate as such — the Critical Theorist is supposed to be able to diagnose the wrongness and falseness of existing society in a very determinate way from the very start. That means that the relationship between the positive and the negative is, in Jaeggi's framework, an asymmetrical one — despite their relation of reciprocity, as she herself acknowledges. Moreover, this means that her explanation does not account fully for the claim that 'what utopia is' is always contained in 'what utopia is not'. Jaeggi clarifies this claim only for the initial step of critique, for what I called a positive preconception of utopia. In Jaeggi's view this positive preconception is universal, which must mean that it is inherent in the historical reality. It could be said that the relationship between this positive *preconception* and the negative is thus "perfectly" reciprocal: each constitutes and is constituted by the other. The same cannot be said for the positive as a *determinate conception*. This positive determinate conception is only constituted by the negative side. On its own its constitution, vis-à-vis both constitution and "constituentness" of the positive preconception, is not problematic. The remaining question, however, is the following: how is this constitution of the positive through the negative to function? Only then might we be able to ascertain the given claim that utopia is indeed contained in the non-utopia.

The answer seems to lie in the practice of determinate negation. This contention, that the more concrete positive conception is constituted through determinate negation, that is, through a disavowal of that which is false or wrong in the existing society, has been most clearly articulated by Elizabeth Pritchard in the following passage:

Adorno argues that the practice of determinate negation which focuses attention on the precise contours of damaged life, actually does provide a glimpse of that which lies beyond the status quo [...] determinate negation is indicative of the character of the absolute. This negation forms a script of the absolute; it does not actually accomplish the transformation of society from damaged life to reconciliation [...] What Adorno is suggesting is that this

script, composed from the ruins of damaged life, contains a code of the absolute.²⁵⁸

What needs to be noted in this passage is that determinate negation is bestowed with a certain active or constructive power. Whereas determinate negation might indeed not be able to *realise* a utopian society ('actually accomplish the transformation of society from damaged life to reconciliation'), Pritchard sees it can *form* or *provide* a conception of this society ('negation forms a script of the absolute', 'provide a glimpse of that which lies beyond the status quo'). This claim points to the fact that the kind of positive image of utopia which Pritchard appeals to is not merely that which is always already contained in the world as it exists, but to one which arises or ensues from determinately negating this world. It seems as if there was something innate to the very process of determinate negation that would transform or amplify the vague preconception of utopia into a determinate conception of it. But, is there? Does determinate negation in fact enhance the determinate negativity into determinate positivity?

Does determinate negation make sense?

The concept of determinate negation ('bestimmte Negation') was originally devised by Hegel. Hegel defines determinate negation in opposition to abstract negation, which he articulates as the negation of everything: in the course of the negation the object that is negated is completely annihilated, obliterated on the whole. As Michael Rosen puts it, one can think of abstract negation as 'wiping clean of a blackboard'.²⁵⁹ The act of abstract negation is independent of the content or form, or any other quality of the writings on the blackboard; irrespective of these qualities, abstract negation rubs what was on the blackboard of it. The result of abstract negation is what Hegel calls nothingness as well as indeterminacy, or an indeterminate being. In contrast, by determinate negation Hegel refers to the negation of merely one aspect, or one feature of the negated object. Accordingly, the result of determinate negation

²⁵⁸ Pritchard, 'Bilderverbot meets body in Theodor W. Adorno's inverse theology', pp. 302-3.

²⁵⁹ Michael Rosen, *Hegel's Dialectic and its Criticism* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 32.

is also different to that of abstract negation. Hegel gives the following account of the result of determinate negation:

the cognition of the logical proposition that the negative is equally positive, or that that which contradicts itself does not dissolve into Zero [Null] but essentially only into the negation of its particular content, or that such a negation is not all negation but the negation of the determinate subject-matter [Sache] which dissolves and is thus determinate negation, so that that from which it results is essentially contained in the result — which actually is a tautology, for otherwise it would be something immediate and not a result.²⁶⁰

In this passage Hegel defines determinate negation as ‘the negation of the determinate subject-matter’, which means, as I have already pointed out above, negation of one particular (‘determinate’ is the term Hegel uses) aspect of the negated object. Further on, by stating that ‘that from which it results is essentially contained in the result’ Hegel explicates another defining feature of determinate negation — one that is of particular interest to us.

To comprehend what Hegel meant by this it helps to think of the *result* and the *act* of determinate negation as one and the same. To determinately negate an object is to assert that a particular aspect of the object ‘is not’. This assertion, this *act* of asserting, that the object ‘is not’, is at the same time also the *result* of determinate negation. In that the assertion that the object ‘is not’ is the result of determinate negation, this result is, of course, negative. Yet, this is not everything that the result is. Hegel renders that ‘the negative is equally positive’, implying that the result of determinate negation is not only negative but also positive. In other words, the assertion that a particular aspect of the object ‘is not’ entails an additional assertion, namely that another particular aspect of the object ‘is’. This idea is certainly not intelligible simply in its own terms, which actually is not problematic in itself. The real issue lies in that Hegel does not seem to explain it elsewhere either. As Rosen observes, while ‘this thesis about the nature of [determinate negation] — that it

²⁶⁰ G. W. F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, quoted in and trans. by Rosen, *Hegel’s Dialectic and its Criticism*, p. 31.

leads to a positive result — is fundamental to Hegel's understanding of the nature of his enterprise', Hegel does not really guide us through how he reaches this conclusion.²⁶¹ With respect to this conclusion, Rosen further inquires:

how is it to be established? Does it, perhaps, even need establishment? Hegel had, indeed, claimed that it is 'actually a tautology' that to negate is to produce a negated something, not nothing. Yet very little examination shows the doctrine of determinate negation to be in fact anything but a tautology in the sense of being trivially true.²⁶²

Here, Rosen highlights very clearly that Hegel makes an unjustified causal link between the two defining characteristics of determinate negation, namely between 'the negation of the determinate subject-matter [Sache] which dissolves and is thus determinate negation' and 'that from which it results is essentially contained in the result' with a conjunctive 'so that'. Rosen moreover shows that for Hegel the causality of this link does not require a justification because he sees this link as a tautology: that the result of determinate negation is at the same time a determinate positive is simply true by itself.

If something is true by itself, then, of course, it does not need to be further explicated. We can, however, challenge Hegel's claim that the identity between the positive and the negative is a tautology and look for possible justification elsewhere than Hegel's own perspective. An established justification is associated with the understanding of Hegel's philosophical system as a teleological one. This justification is also shared by Adorno, who articulated it in his lectures on negative dialectics. In his third lecture Adorno states that 'in Hegel the positivity of dialectic is at the same time its premise (i.e. the subject, the spirit) and its telos, it carries the system'.²⁶³ In one way, Adorno's point here appears especially illuminating towards the issue I have been trying to grasp, of this apparently perplexing point about the relationship between the positive and the negative. Adorno's simple answer is that Hegel's alleged imbrication of the two presents a premise or a presupposition of his

²⁶¹ Rosen, p. 31.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Adorno, *Vorlesung über Negative Dialektik*, p. 40.

philosophical system: the positive outcome or result of determinate negation is assumed to be there from the very beginning.

Adorno's view of the procedure of determinate negation, however, does not strictly coincide with Hegel's. In the lecture cited above Adorno renders that in contrast to Hegel, his own conception of determinate negation does not possess its own positive aspect.²⁶⁴ According to Adorno, this absence of positivity results from the suspension of the teleological dimension that Adorno identified in Hegel's dialectics — which he too, alongside his reconfiguration of determinate negation, came to modify. In contrast to Hegel's dialectics, which, according to Adorno, leads to synthesis — a positive result — his own, negative, dialectics brings about what he called 'the non-identical'.²⁶⁵ Whereas a synthesis amounts to an *identity* between thesis (identity) and anti-thesis (non-identity), Adorno's non-identical amounts to a *non-identity* between the two — a negative result. As I pointed out above, Adorno contended that in the framework of his thought determinate negation is free from not only a synthesis but also from possessing a telos — two concepts which are for Adorno closely intertwined with that of positivity. We might thus expect that Adorno disposes with positivity as such too. This, however, is not the case. Whereas, indeed, he contends that determinate negation does not possess its own positive aspect, he nevertheless does recognise positivity, and locates it as lying in the negative.²⁶⁶ That is, in Adorno's conception, determinate negation retains a certain positivity, yet it appears as if this positivity is weakened or toned down, robbed of its own self — it does not exist as its "own aspect" but only in the intertwinement with its more prominent counterpart of negativity.

In that Adorno's notion of positivity is always already contained in the negative, it corresponds only to one of Jaeggi's kinds of positivity, namely that of the positive good universal. However, elsewhere in Adorno's writings we can identify also the other kind of positivity Jaeggi distinguishes, the more concrete positive, the positive that results from the process of determinate negation. Above all I have in mind one

²⁶⁴ Adorno, *Vorlesung über Negative Dialektik*, p. 40.

²⁶⁵ Adorno uses this term very frequently in the *Negative Dialektik* as well as some of his other works, see, e.g., *Negative Dialektik*, pp. 125-8.

²⁶⁶ Adorno, *Vorlesung über Negative Dialektik*, p. 40.

particular statement that Adorno makes in *Minima Moralia* — ‘the consummate negativity, once squarely faced, explodes into the mirror-image of its opposite’.²⁶⁷ Here Adorno does hint at some form of positivity that is not merely always already there, but is instead created or produced. Adorno suggests that only once reality is articulated fully into its detail is its utopian opposite delineated or created. To be more precise, Adorno does not say it is created but that it *explodes*. The distinction between the two is crucial in that the explosion has an even greater connotation of a transformation, production or creation than emergence does. But where does this transformative or creative power of negation come from? In that this negation is ‘consummate’? And can this transformative power even be ascribed to negation?

Precisely this ascription of transformative power to negation is a point which Bloch openly disputed. It is worthwhile to quote Bloch’s objection at length:

Im Negativum der objektiven Dialektik (Krankheit, Krise, drohender Untergang in die Barbarei) ist auch zweifellos ein Umgang von Vernichtung, also nicht nur von Nicht, als dem aktiven Treiber, sondern auch von Nichts, als der nur auslöschenden Negation, die an sich, automatisch, noch keineswegs die Negation ihrer Negation in sich hat. Es ist das mithin ein Umgang, der an sich, ohne Eingriff des subjektiv-aktiven Widerspruchs, eher zur Herauentwicklung eines Umsonst führt als eines Alles. Ja, ein subjektiv-aktiver Gegenzug gegen die Vernichtung kann nötig sein, damit die zur Vernichtung des Vernichtenswerten selber gebraucht werden kann und dadurch erst zur dialektischen Freilegung neuen Lebens. Ein Automatismus der objektiven Dialektik, hin zum Guten, mit dem bequemen Motto: Durch Nacht zum Licht, besteht derart keinesfalls. Sondern erst ein Mitzug und — in Zeiten der Katastrophe — ein Gegenzug des subjektiven Faktors macht die Negativität in der objektiven Dialektik vollends zur Dienerin des möglichen Gelingens. Während Negativität an sich — wie im Peloponnesischen Krieg, im Dreißigjährigen Krieg, in allen schlechthinnigen Untergängen überhaupt

²⁶⁷ Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 281: ‘die vollendete Negativität, einmal ganz ins Auge gefaßt, zur Spiegelschrift ihres Gegenteils zusammenschießt’.

— gerade historisch keine Frucht trägt, das heißt, die Negation der Negation keineswegs aus der eigenen Objektivität allein zu entwickeln imstande ist.²⁶⁸

The key claim Bloch makes in this passage that is of our interest at this point is that Adorno's idea of the transformative power of negation and its corresponding production of the positive presumes 'ein Automatismus'. He illustrates this automatism through the analogy he draws between the relationship between the positive and the negative, and that between day and night. As long as the Earth circles the sun, the sunlight will always appear following the night. This is not the case with the emergence of utopia. Even if the negative aspects of the existing society are identified — such as 'Krankheit, Krise, drohender Untergang in die Barbarei' — Bloch contends there is simply no equivalent law which would guarantee their transformation into the positive, and moreover into the positive that could be designated as a utopian society.

The emergence of the positive in constellations

A third possible reply to the question of how a positive utopia can be preserved in its negative is contained in the notion of constellation. Presumably, Adorno himself first encountered the relevant usages of this word when he read Benjamin's *Trauerspiel* in the late 1920s.²⁶⁹ However, the word recurs in Adorno's work throughout his career, from his inaugural lecture as 'Privatdozent' in 1931 on 'Die Aktualität der Philosophie' to the late pieces collected in *Eingriffe: neun Kritische Modelle* (1963), in the course of which it obtains its own distinct meaning. Put simply, a constellation is a distinct rhetorical figure that Adorno both advanced theoretically and employed in his writings. In terms of some better known rhetorical figures constellations resemble those of allegories, aphorisms or tropes, that is, concise metaphorical expressions of a certain higher meaning relating to reality.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ Bloch, *Subjekt-Objekt*, pp. 515-6.

²⁶⁹ For a historical evolution of this concept by Adorno, especially in relation to Benjamin's work see Buck-Morss, pp. 96-109.

²⁷⁰ In his book *Marxism and Form* Fredric Jameson dubs Adorno's constellations as 'historical tropes.' Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and form: twentieth-century dialectical theories of literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 3-59.

In the words of Susan Buck-Morss, constellations constitute a 'method in action', which in turn, Max Pensky sees as 'somehow Adorno's most influential and enduring intellectual legacy'.²⁷¹ Adorno himself attributed significant weight to constellations. In the mentioned inaugural lecture he postulated that bringing concepts in constellations amounts to the most important task of philosophy.²⁷²

That constellations could intimate positive utopias has been hinted at by Jaeggi herself. Although it is not completely clear whether she employs this concept in the specific Adornian sense, she highlights clearly the link between constellations and positive utopias: 'not infrequently lies the positive content of such negative models solely in very specific constellations, in balancing acts between the wrong possibilities which Adorno retraces in a dizzying manner'.²⁷³ A number of other scholars share this view, and have in fact advanced it further. For example, Gerhard Richter has made his argument in terms almost identical to Jaeggi's. Richter observes that this distinctiveness of Adorno's rhetorical figure — for which instead of a constellation Richter uses a closely related term of 'thought-image' ('Denkbild') devised originally by Benjamin — lies in their distinct negativity, 'a negativity that in its relentlessness also activates a sense of the futurity of the positive'.²⁷⁴ In other words, Richter seems to concur with Jaeggi in that constellations are not purely negative constructions, portraying the present solely as ill and wrong, but rather, as such constructions which alongside the falseness of the present engender the goodness of the future. Similarly, in his study of Adorno's constellations, David Kaufmann has argued that this notion can be best understood as an 'image of a whole that is the truth', and furthermore as 'the outline of Redemption, of differences conjoined without domination'.²⁷⁵ The meanings of the two central concepts of 'truth' and 'Redemption', which Kaufmann uses in the senses peculiar to

²⁷¹ Buck-Morss, p. 98; Max Pensky, 'Introduction: Adorno's Actuality', in *The Actuality of Adorno: Critical Essays on Adorno and the Postmodern*, ed. by Max Pensky (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), pp. 1-21 (p. 4).

²⁷² Adorno, 'Die Aktualität der Philosophie', *Philosophische Frühschriften*, GS, Vol. 1, pp. 325-44 (p. 335).

²⁷³ Jaeggi, 'Kein Einzelner vermag etwas dagegen', in *Dialektik der Freiheit*, ed. by Honneth, p. 135.

²⁷⁴ Richter, p. 14.

²⁷⁵ David Kaufmann, 'Correlations, constellations and the truth: Adorno's ontology of redemption', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 26:5 (2000), 62-80 (p. 77).

Adorno, both converge with that of a positive conception of utopia. Kaufmann himself sees 'Utopia' as nothing but the 'political name' for 'redemption.'²⁷⁶

What, however, is this rhetorical figure of constellation more specifically? What does it look like? And, more critically, how could it engender a positive image of utopia? Given that Adorno regards concepts themselves as an inherently unsuitable vehicle for conveying the content of a utopian society, how are then constellations supposed to accomplish this task? After all, the building blocks of a constellation are concepts as well. Or, to appropriate a remark made by Richter, how are constellations supposed 'to say in words that which cannot be said in words?'.²⁷⁷

I suggest that constellations can be better understood through their relation to determinate negation. The two methods are in fact not as distinct as might initially seem, in that one has to do with logic and the other with rhetoric. Constellations could in fact be seen as a more complex product of determinate negation compared to that of one determinately negated statement. In one determinately negated statement, one feature or one object of the existing society is identified as false and thus as a non-utopian one. A constellation brings together a multiplicity of these statements, thereby simultaneously criticising multiple aspects of society. Constellations could thus be considered to present a specific assembly of disparate, determinately negated statements. As I will elaborate further below, a key for an explanation of how a positive utopia might arise from initially purely negative ones could lie precisely in this step of bringing together several of latter. This question of *how* a positive utopia might arise at this rhetorical level in fact presupposes another key premise of the concept of constellation that is shared also by that of determinate negation. This is the premise that what a utopian society comprises has, to a certain extent, already been determined, that its actual content, its apparent features and underlying norms are somehow, to some extent inherent in the world as it exists now. This premise does not at all correspond to universalism in its strongest sense, namely that there is one correct form of how one should live her life. In a way,

²⁷⁶ Although the terms 'utopia' and 'Redemption' might not be exactly synonymous in Adorno's own writings, the meaning of the concept of utopia I have set out in the beginning does substantially overlap with Adorno's usage of that of 'Redemption.' See, e.g., Adorno's final aphorism in *Minima Moralia*, p. 281.

²⁷⁷ Cf. Richter, p. 13

Adorno's conception of utopia could be understood as the exact opposite of this view. As Adorno phrased it in one of what I have called his residuals of positive utopian images, he emphasised the value of the difference among individuals, positing a desirable society as one in which 'one can be different without fear'.²⁷⁸ However, in the face of this pluralist conception of utopia, Adorno does admit to the existence of certain universally valid norms. These norms are entailed in what Jaeggi, in the context of determinate negation, refers to as the positive good universal, and what Benjamin, in the context of constellations, calls 'truth'.²⁷⁹

The nature of Benjamin's concept of truth is completely unrelated to the one which we are likely to be more familiar with, one that sees truth as a correct correspondence between the objects of material reality and empirical facts. For this conception of truth, according to which a certain idea or a theory counts as true depends on whether it accords with our sensical experiences of reality, Benjamin used the term 'scientific knowledge' ('Wissenschaft').²⁸⁰ To this concept of knowledge Benjamin contrasted that of truth, which instead of being concerned with correspondence is concerned with the *meaning* of reality. As Eli Friedlander has framed Benjamin's distinction between the two most succinctly: 'For Benjamin, knowledge is the correctness of our way of looking at the world, but truth is a unity of being recognized in reality *itself*'.²⁸¹ This formulation of the notion of truth might indeed resemble Plato's concept of the Idea. The Platonic Ideas, however, presuppose a dualism which Benjamin rejected, namely between, on the one hand, the realm of language, concepts, meaning, truth, ideas and, on the other hand, the realm of matter, material objects of reality. For Benjamin, truth too is primarily an aspect of material reality — it is inherent in the objects which are the building blocks constituting this realm of the reality. This, however, does not mean that Benjamin saw truth as unrelated to ideas, language and concepts: even if truth

²⁷⁸ Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 176.

²⁷⁹ Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, *Walter Benjamin Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by Tiedemann and Schweppenhäuser, Vol. 1, pp. 203-430 (pp. 207-237).

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Eli Friedlander, *Walter Benjamin: A Philosophical Portrait* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012), p. 12.

resides in matter, it only becomes accessible once we recover it from the medium of matter into that of concepts.²⁸²

Adorno appropriated Benjamin's concept of truth, but, under the influence of a Marxist worldview, Adorno was less concerned with the truth of material reality in its most general sense, that is, of any material object as such, but more so with that of the social or political world. That is, the objects of material reality Adorno was concerned with above all were the social ones, such as social relations or social institutions. In this sense Adorno recognised the existence of what could be called a 'social truth'. That this social truth in fact overlaps with Jaeggi's notion of the positive good universal is evident in David Kaufmann's discussion of it. Kaufmann points out that, for Adorno, 'truth of an object' was not limited to 'what it has become' but also 'to what it should be'.²⁸³ Social truth is thus not only what a specific society has become, but also what it should be, that is, it corresponds to a set of universally valid principles defining certain aspects of a good, utopian society.

In what Adorno furthermore accorded with Benjamin was in the latter's contention that this truth could in principle be expressed by the means of conceptual language, but not by one in a positive or identity form. Benjamin regarded translation, quotation and naming as those conceptual practices which could convey truth. For example, naming — giving names to objects — accomplishes this because a name, for Benjamin, as opposed to a concept, does not abstract from the object it refers to — it does not emphasise certain characteristic of an object on the account of others. A name, in Benjamin's view, captures all of one object's particularities, and also its wholeness — the being as such — its truth. Naming, however, has also an evident defect — it lacks a cognitive function. This has been noted not only by Benjamin but also explicitly by Adorno. Referring to positive thinking he noted that:

²⁸² Friedlander, p. 16.

²⁸³ Kaufmann, 'Correlations, constellations and the truth: Adorno's ontology of redemption', p. 73.

Wie statt dessen zu denken wäre, das hat in den Sprachen sein fernes und undeutliches Urbild an den Namen, welche die Sache nicht kategorial überspinnen freilich um dem Preis ihrer Erkenntnisfunktion.²⁸⁴

By this Adorno means that naming cannot realistically be employed as a means of communication, since “talking in names” would correspond to each of us speaking our own individual language, thus failing to understand each other on the whole. Thus, for Benjamin, expressing truth is what naming can only wish, or hope for, and not actually accomplish. Other conceptual practices, such as translation or quotation, must instead take over this function. In Adorno’s case, this task of expressing truth has been passed onto the construction of constellations. Adorno’s view is reflected in the already mentioned remark in which Adorno defines constellations as the objective of philosophy:

so hat Philosophie ihre Elemente, die sie von den Wissenschaften empfängt, so lange in wechselnde Konstellationen, oder, um es mit einem minder astrologischen und wissenschaftlich aktuelleren Ausdruck zu sagen: in wechselnde Versuchsanordnungen zu bringen, bis sie zur Figur geraten, die als Antwort lesbar wird, während zugleich die Frage verschwindet.²⁸⁵

In this passage Adorno does indeed not call truth by its name. However, its constituting phrase — ‘the figure that can be read as an answer, while at the same time the question disappears’ — can be construed as a cipher of truth. Adorno posits that an answer is what can be read, that is, what can be gathered or inferred from constellations. That this answer does not simply present a reply to a pre-formulated question, but instead to something more general, Adorno indicates by stating that its recognition has a certain consequence — the disappearance of the question. This means that the answer annihilates or overcomes the originally posed question, thereby conveying a certain content which reaches beyond the answer which this question has sought, something contained in the reality beyond its existing form. It does seem that Adorno in general refrained from calling truth by its name, at least in the context of his deliberations on constellations. Another of his remarks is similarly

²⁸⁴ Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, p. 61.

²⁸⁵ Adorno, ‘Die Aktualität der Philosophie’, *Philosophische Frühschriften*, p. 335.

concealing of what Adorno regarded as that which constellations are meant to express:

Nur Begriffe können vollbringen, was der Begriff verhindert [...] Der bestimmbare Fehler aller Begriffe nötigt, andere herbeizuzitieren; darin entspringen jene Konstellationen, an die allein von der Hoffnung des Names etwas überging.²⁸⁶

Instead of using a determinate form of the noun indicating what concepts (in the plural) can accomplish, which is at the same time what a concept (in the singular) prevents, Adorno uses the indeterminate form of 'what'. This practice he repeats often, also in the following claim: 'Constellations alone represent from the outside that what the concept has cut away from the inside'.²⁸⁷ Again, in this sentence Adorno does not specify what that is which the concept has cut away from the inside and leaves the reader with the indeterminate 'what'. Returning to the previous quotations we are, however, given another cue that this indeterminate 'what' could stand for truth. The cue lies in the very last part of the sentence: something that is passed over from the hope of the name. As I have explained above, although naming cannot in practice express truth, this function of expressing truth is what defines it most befittingly, even if only its potential and not as it actually exists. This potential of naming, or, in Adorno's words, what the name hopes for, has, however, been passed onto other conceptual practices, including in this case onto the construction of constellations.

As I have shown the notion of constellation, just as that of determinate negation, premises the existence of a certain "universal" enclosing that what reality ought to be, that is, of some norms that are supposed to remain valid irrespective of the specific form this reality takes in every point of time. In the context of social reality specifically, this universal corresponds to a set of principles affirming what a society ought to become, in other words, to what a utopian society is — to its positive image. However, in sharing this premise, determinate negation and constellations are set apart by one significant difference. The act of articulation of this positive

²⁸⁶ Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, p. 62.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

good universal, that of recovering it from the material reality, is much more prominent in the case of constellations. Whereas determinate negation too is bound to concepts, it is, after all, a method of theory and as such must necessarily proceed via concepts, it does not appear that the conceptualisation it entails is by itself somehow productive. This is different in the case of constellations. Therein the act of fabricating them, that is, of assembling concepts in a specific structure or configuration is considered not merely as a necessary but rather as essential to recuperating the positive universal from its materiality. As Adorno attests to this idea in a remark quoted above: in citing concepts alongside each other a constellation arises. That is, it is only in the very undertaking of organising concepts into a specific figure, image, form or structure that a constellation emerges and together with it the positive universal. What this means is that the figure into which concepts, more precisely, into which determinately negated statements are assembled is what could enhance the constituting negative utopias into a positive one. Here also the initial reference to constellations as *rhetorical* figures becomes clearer: that which this conceptual practice is supposed to convey is not limited strictly to the content of its building blocks, of the determinately negated statements but to the specificity of the *manner* in which these building blocks are employed or manipulated. Just as when looking into the night sky, we are likely to spot not only individual stars, but also 'Orion' or the 'Little Bear' (two better known astronomical constellations), we are, by reading Adorno's *Minima Moralia* supposed to comprehend not only the individual wrongs and ills of the existing society, but also the whole of the good and the right. But does this positive image of utopia in fact emerge in constellations to its readers? Is the positivity sufficiently distinct and resolute to shine through the underlying negativity?

Something is missing

As I have illustrated above, many of Adorno's commentators endeavour to interpret his decisive insistence on negativity not as pure negativity but also as positivity; not as negativity that comes to a halt with the acts of denial, criticism and rejection of the wrongness of the existing social world but as negativity that reaches beyond the negative as such, into the spheres of the positive, the spheres of affirmation and

avowal of the rightness of an alternative social world. However, paralleling this tendency to emphasise the existence of positivity in Adorno's thought is a certain awareness that this positivity does not quite compensate for the positive utopian thinking Adorno aimed to supersede in the first place. Does the image of the right society really materialise from an image of the wrong society? Adorno's scholars have thought of creative ways as to how Adorno's thought might be imbued with alternative kinds of positivity, but perhaps we should, nevertheless, question whether these alternative interpretations do deserve to be perceived as positivity.

Among others, Adorno's contemporary and friend Thomas Mann could not discern from *Minima Moralia* Adorno's conception of a better society. In a letter he wrote to Adorno in October 1952 recounting his opinion of the book published in a previous year, Mann craves for something positive in Adorno's constellations:

Gäbe es nur je ein positives Wort bei Ihnen, Verehrter, das eine auch nur ungefähre Vision der wahren, der zu postulierenden Gesellschaft gewährte! Die Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben ließen es daran, nur daran, auch schon fehlen. Was ist, was wäre das Rechte?²⁸⁸

Whereas on the one hand Mann concurs with the commonplace reading of Adorno in that he sees his writings as lacking 'a positive word', on the other hand, he also opposes it. In contrast to the efforts of some of Adorno's later commentators Mann finds that Adorno's constellations do not warrant any insight into his conception of a utopian society. Mann contends that Adorno's reflections from damaged life don't permit even a glimpse of a true society. Mann is not simply making the obvious claim that *Minima Moralia* does not amount to a detailed and expansive exposition of a utopian society in any programmatic form. This view is incontestable. Mann is making a more nuanced claim that *Minima Moralia* contains no explication of a utopian society, in no form and kind, that this text does not provide us even a slightest insight into this society.

²⁸⁸ Thomas Mann, 'Mann an Adorno 30. Oktober 1952', in *Briefe und Briefwechsel / Theodor W. Adorno, Theodor W. Adorno, Thomas Mann Briefwechsel, Vol. 4, 1943-1955*, ed. by Christoph Gödde und Thomas Sprecher (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002), pp. 121-23 (p. 122).

Even if we accede that positive images of a utopian society do underlie and/or coexist with the negative ones of the existing society, it is undeniable that the former are buried deep down beneath the latter and thus are hardly accessible to the reader, if at all. The positive images are secondary to Adorno's text, whereas the negative ones present its primary layer. The most common account of *Minima Moralia* represents it as an assembly of critical and detailed reflections on certain wrong beliefs, habits, values, qualities and practices that in Adorno's view characterise the society of his time. In one of the many studies of this text, *Minima Moralia Neu Gelesen*, Andreas Bernard describes it as 'Adorno's attempt to spell out the alienation of the individual into its minutest ramifications in everyday life and to think the decline into barbarism from the invention of doorknobs, gift articles, and room service'.²⁸⁹ 'Genuineness', is for example one of these everyday ramifications.²⁹⁰ Adorno condemns this moral trait to be an illusion in the existing bourgeois society: the impulses which we believe are genuine are in fact not, since, as Adorno justifies it, they always contain 'an element of imitation, play, wanting to be different'.²⁹¹ Each of the in total 153 aphorisms articulates a concrete manifestation of what Marx, as well as his later followers, such as Lukács, diagnosed as the main ills of the capitalist society — that is, the phenomena of alienation, commodification, fetishisation, exploitation, reification and others. The first aphorism contends how specialisation and division of labour, the practices introduced by the Industrial Revolution initially in the production of material goods, have now also penetrated the domain of knowledge production: 'The occupation with things of mind has by now itself become "practical", a business with strict division of labour, departments and restricted entry'.²⁹² The second aphorism laments a disintegration of social relations, specifically those within a nuclear family. Within this sphere the estrangement of an individual from their community has, in Adorno's view, reached the extreme of a complete disintegration of a family.²⁹³ The third aphorism attests to the instrumentalisation and marketisation of the activities people engage in during their 'free' time, time outside their jobs. Adorno argues that

²⁸⁹ Bernard, 'Einleitung', in "*Minima Moralia*" neu gelesen, ed. by Bernard und Raulff, pp. 7-11 (p. 8).

²⁹⁰ Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 171.

²⁹¹ Ibid., p. 172.

²⁹² Ibid., p. 21.

²⁹³ Ibid., p. 23.

in the modern society all activities are instrumentalised, that is, are in need of having a goal or a purpose: 'Today it is seen as arrogant, alien and improper to engage in private activity without any evident ulterior motive'; and moreover, that these activities are now being exchanged on the market, that is, bought and sold, produced and consumed: 'the entire private domain is being engulfed by a mysterious activity that bears all the feature of commercial life without there being actually any business to transact'.²⁹⁴ The fourth aphorism corroborates the absence of any authentic emotions, either of affection or dislike, and so does the fifth one. Adorno presents the modern society as profoundly damaged, deeply in its core, the damages and wrongs of which are however often disguised — on the outside they appear as their opposites of the good and the right. The rightness of the existing society is thus for Adorno always only a 'pseudo' rightness. *Minima Moralia* contains no single mention of a 'properly' good or right habit, aspect, belief or practice existent in the modern society. This uncompromisingly negative attitude towards the object of Adorno's study is augmented stylistically by a dark and sarcastic tone of the language reflected in the ubiquity of unappealing verbs and adjectives and lamenting metaphors. Already in the very first paragraph, the paragraph which ends in one of the better known, utterly cynical decrees that 'there is life no longer', the reader is overwhelmed by this negativity imbued in the choice of language.²⁹⁵ Today's 'passions' and 'individuals' Adorno respectively compares to 'cheap jewellery' and 'components of machines'.²⁹⁶ The alleged positivity of this text is submerged even more by the density of diverse, often seemingly unrelated motives. In the aphorisms, which on average scarcely amount to more than a page, like for example the one entitled 'Always speak of it, never think of it' Adorno deplores mass culture, psychoanalysis, identity thinking, standardisation of individual lifestyles, the loss of the the 'self', as well as positivism and the Enlightenment's belief in reason.²⁹⁷ Amidst this richness of negative motives, the three aforementioned explicitly positive references to a good society easily escape the reader, and furthermore, rather than, as the defender's of Adorno's utopianism contest 'activating the

²⁹⁴ Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, pp. 22-3.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 4.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 13.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 71-2.

positive' through the mechanism of constellations they certainly also work directly against it.

A more adequate way of framing how a positive utopia is entailed in Adorno's writings in terms of the existence of a *possibility* of a utopian society. Here I take a cue from one of Adorno's own remarks, namely that 'there is no longer beauty or consolation except in the gaze falling on horror, withstanding it, and in unalleviated consciousness of negativity holding fast to the possibility of what is better'.²⁹⁸ Assuming that Adorno's writings really do reveal the existing world as it truly is, and that this revelation depends on adopting a utopian standpoint, then determinate negation or constellations offer a way of how the existence a utopia as a possibility is affirmed. However, the affirmation of the mere possibility should be distinguished from positing of the content of this possibility. Adorno's negative utopia does not say anything *about* the utopia.

This, however, has not been a view so far embraced by the scholarship, which has basically equated Adorno's negative utopianism with a positive one, albeit cured of the issues which positive thinking generates. By drawing this identity between positive and negative utopian thinking, more weight has been placed on what there is (left) of utopia in its negative form, as opposed to what is lost, or more precisely what dimensions, functions, parts and effects of utopian thinking have been lost in its reconfiguration enacted by Adorno. That something has indeed been lost in this reconfiguration from envisioning a utopia in an open and explicit way to a more concealed and complex one, and moreover that this something is valuable was acknowledged by Adorno himself: he told Bloch in the already referred to radio conversation that something terrible has occurred in this reconfiguration.²⁹⁹ That what has been lost is indeed desirable is visible even more clearly in how Mann framed his remark about the absence of positive images of the good society in *Minima Moralia*. Mann did not make this remark in a neutral manner, simply stating that these images are lacking. Instead, in exclaiming to Adorno, 'if only your texts

²⁹⁸ Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 26.

²⁹⁹ Adorno in Bloch, 'Etwas fehlt', *Tendenz-Latenz-Utopie*, p. 363.

included a positive word [...] What is, what would be the right?'.³⁰⁰ Mann is longing, wishing and craving for these images. As such, even the efforts of those scholars of Adorno to recover in his writing a positive notion of a utopia testify to the value and desirability of positivity.

For his part, Adorno only hints at what this valuable something might be. He implicitly acknowledges that an explicit positive explication of a utopian society is valuable in that it reinforces the utopian consciousness ('das utopische Bewußtsein') and thereby also the will for things, the world to be different.³⁰¹ In what way, however, are these kinds of utopian images supposed to reinforce the utopian consciousness? An even more elemental question concerns the utopian consciousness itself — what does Adorno mean by it? And how it is related to the will to live in a different society?

³⁰⁰ Mann, 'Mann an Adorno 30 Oktober 1952', in *Theodor W. Adorno, Thomas Mann: Briefwechsel*, p. 122.

³⁰¹ Adorno in Bloch, 'Etwas fehlt', *Tendenz-Latenz-Utopie*, p. 363.

CHAPTER 4

Bloch's rejection of the *Utopieverbot*

Bloch's life and times

Ernst Bloch (1885-1977), a Marxist philosopher of hope, utopia and the future, in many respects presents an anomaly among Critical Theorists.³⁰² A contemporary of Adorno and other members of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, his work is non-contemporaneous, substantially removed from the kind of thinking and writing involved not only at the Institute but more broadly in his times. Born into a family of assimilated, working-class Jews, Bloch's interest for intellectual matters dominated his life from an early age onwards — from as early as his teenage years Bloch spent considerable amounts of time reflecting on abstract philosophical issues and discussing these in the correspondence he had with some of the major contemporary thinkers in Germany, Ernst Mach, Theodor Lipps, Eduard von Hartmann, among others. Many of his most important ideas were formulated in this early formative period between 1902 and 1918, the year in which he published his first manuscript, *Geist der Utopie*. His career as an academic philosopher followed a different track, however. He only obtained his first academic post, a professorship at the University of Leipzig, at the age of 64. Bloch and his wife Karola settled in Leipzig in 1949, upon their return from exile, the last nine years of which they spent in the United States. There Bloch led an isolated life, never learning English, and maintaining barely any contact with other expatriated Critical Theorists. By 1950s Bloch was an established Marxian theorist in East Germany. His own variety of Marxism, however, was then seen as (and still remains) highly idiosyncratic. What marks it off from those advanced by other Critical Theorists is its style, its uncommon intellectual heritage — chiliasm, mysticism, gnosticism, German Expressionism and Kabbalistic Romanticism, to mention a few of his subjectivist and

³⁰² This section draws on Hudson, *The Marxist Philosophy of Ernst Bloch*, pp. 1-21. For a more extended account of Bloch biography see Arno Münster, *Ernst Bloch: eine politische Biographie* (Hamburg: CEP Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 2012); and Peter Zudeick, *Der Hintern des Teufels: Ernst Bloch - Leben und Werk* (Moos: Elster Verlag, 1987).

idealist influences — and its explicit dealing with ontological questions of being, becoming and existence. Throughout his life Bloch worked on developing a new, processual type of ontology, which he formulated with the help of many mind-boggling neologisms. Although his ontology is implicit in all his writings, it only received its most complete, systematic explication in his final manuscript, *Experimentum Mundi, Frage, Kategorien des Herausbringens, Praxis*. This work was published in 1975 in West Germany, where Bloch spent roughly the last two decades of his life, after the East German regime reached its final verdict of Bloch's philosophical, as well as political outlooks as too heretical. He was consequently granted political asylum by West Germany in 1961. Bloch, however, continued to believe in socialist principles and supported other socialist inspired movements, including the 1968 student protests. Neither did his disillusionment with the Soviet experiment lead to a reverse in his philosophical outlook. As he explained in his inaugural lecture on being appointed professor in Tübingen, disappointment is inherent in hope.

Bloch introduced many new concepts and ideas into the world of Critical Theory, and philosophy more broadly. The crucial ones are those that relate to utopia, educated hope, matter, upright gait, and pre-appearance of objectively-real possibilities. Bloch also revised some of the traditional dualisms including those of subjectivity and objectivity, and religion and atheism. Underlying all these reconceptualisation, inventions and revisions, however, is his term 'Not-Yet' ('Noch-Nicht'). In this and the subsequent chapter I attempt to provide an intelligible if not comprehensive overview Bloch's philosophy. The focus, however, remains the ends of utopian thinking in Critical Theory, this time, of course, from a Blochian perspective.

Utopia as the 'Not-Yet'

Bloch has a very broad conception of utopia and utopian thinking. In contrast to the sense I examine in this thesis, as a discursive practice confined to philosophy with a commitment to radical social change, Bloch's initial contention about utopian thinking is that it permeates almost every human engagement: most of what we say,

do or make is to be interpreted also as an expression of a utopia. Thereby Bloch augments the definition of utopian thinking to an even greater extent than his fellow critical theorists. Indeed, Adorno, as well as Horkheimer and Marcuse, partially shared Bloch's understanding of utopian thinking as ideas that reach beyond their individual articulation, into the social or collective consciousness. As Lucien Hölscher observes more generally in relation to post-First World War Western European thought, the concern with utopian thinking shifted from an individual literary work or project of social reform to the state of collective consciousness which had generated them.³⁰³ Besides Bloch, it was Karl Mannheim who in his juxtaposition of utopia to ideology contributed to this more general refocusing of utopian thinking as 'utopian consciousness'.³⁰⁴ In light of this shift Adorno's concern with utopian thinking remains rather restricted. In his view it was above all the great works of art that effectively apprehended and seized this utopian consciousness. Bloch was by comparison much more generous in his appraisal of the utopian element in human practices. For Bloch the question of which human practices most adequately capture the utopian element was secondary to his contention that utopian element was always already inherent in these practices.

Bloch's claim about the ubiquity of utopian thinking is not simply an a priori one, but is at least in part founded empirically. His three-volume magnum opus, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (1954, 1955, 1959), which Bloch wrote in the course of his exile in the United States between 1938 and 1949, attempts to establish this claim about the ubiquity of utopian thinking as a historical fact. Francesca Vidal sees *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* not as a list of images of hope, but as a working out of a proof that it is innate to humans always to exceed the given.³⁰⁵ In particular, the last three of the five parts of this, over 1000 pages long, manuscript can be read as a documentation of the presence of utopian thinking in human history. Therein Bloch posits and examines the claim that cultural artefacts such as fairytales, films, everyday thinking, sea voyages of medieval Irish monks, folk songs and dances, alchemists' attempts to synthesise gold, theatre performances, myths, travellers' tales, paintings,

³⁰³ Hölscher, 'Utopie', p. 48.

³⁰⁴ Karl Mannheim, *Ideologie und Utopie* (Frankfurt: Verlag G. Schulte-Bulmke, 1952), pp. 169-225.

³⁰⁵ Francesca Vidal, 'Hoffnung', in *Bloch-Wörterbuch*, ed. by Dietschy et al., pp. 189-212, (p. 198).

architectural plans, and furthermore the whole fields of religion, medicine and technology are manifestations of utopian thinking. Bloch observes that for a long time utopian thinking was recognised exclusively in the form of social utopias ('Sozialutopien'), among which he counts the classics of literary utopias such as More's *Utopia*, Campanella's *City of the Sun*, and Bacon's *New Atlantis*, but that these were historically preceded by fairy tales, like the *Arabian Nights*, which, Bloch suggests, can be read as 'a compendium of innovations'.³⁰⁶ The oldest form of utopian thinking, however, Bloch locates in religion. For Bloch, ideas propagated by religious movements are not merely the means by which the ruling class managed to keep other classes down, but as ways in which these oppressed classes express their utopian longings. Although Bloch certainly advances and revises this understanding of religion as a positive one, he claims that its roots lie in Marx's own thought: Bloch is eager to point out that in a well known passage from Marx's Introduction of *Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie*, Marx designates religion not only as 'the opium of the people' but also as 'the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering'.³⁰⁷ A significant part of Bloch's corpus, besides the few chapters in *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, are dedicated to further analysis of how religious ideas can be understood as revolutionary material, not least the two books Bloch dedicates to exactly this topic, namely *Thomas Münzer als Theologe der Revolution* (1921) and *Atheismus im Christentum* (1968).

In more general terms we could say that Bloch considers the wishes, dreams and ideas produced by our imaginations as utopian thinking. On this point Bloch's view conflicts with that of Marx. In the first chapter I suggested that Marx adheres to a dichotomous distinction between rational and imaginary knowledge, which roughly corresponds to the realms of the objective and the subjective. In fact, the ideas that Marx held to be produced by the cognitive faculty of imagination could not, in his view, in any way be considered as knowledge, but instead, as wishful images, as conceptual material that is wholly irrelevant to objective reality. To these products of the imagination Marx, together with Engels, juxtapose their own theories of communism, which are supposedly scientific and objectively valid. Bloch almost

³⁰⁶ Bloch, 'Etwas fehlt', *Tendenz-Latenz-Utopie*, pp. 352-4.

³⁰⁷ Marx, 'Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie; Einleitung', MEW, Vol. 1, p. 378. Bloch quotes Marx in his *Atheismus im Christentum*, GA, Vol. 14, p. 91.

completely annihilates this dichotomous relation between the wishing and knowing. For while Bloch too ascribes a superior value to Marx's writings, one of the reasons he does so, lies precisely in his view of Marx's thought as effectively fusing of subjectively desirable ('subjektiv Wünschbare') with objectively inevitable ('objektiv Unvermeidbare').³⁰⁸ Bloch exalts the *Manifesto* as the epitome of writing that possesses qualities of both realms, specifically a passage in which Marx and Engels declare that the decisive, pre-revolutionary moments are characterised also by the joining of one particular section of the ruling class, the "intelligentsia" to the revolutionary class. In Bloch's view this passage exemplifies:

ein *Zusammenwirken* von Gemüt, Gewissen und vor allem Erkenntnis dazu, um sozialistisches Bewußtsein gegen das eigene bisherige gesellschaftliche Sein abzuheben. Mit dem bedeutenden und kontrastierenden Effekt, das Bewußtsein einem so lange eigenen gesellschaftlichen Sein nicht mehr entsprechen zu lassen, so daß dann streckenweise der Zustand eintritt, wie ihn das »Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei« beschreibt.³⁰⁹

To return to Bloch's conception of utopian thinking: dreams of a better life are what in his view bind together various utterances, and spiritual and somatic acts as forms of utopian thinking. This does not mean that Bloch denies anything other than utopian meanings and functions to these human practices, but only that this utopian function, which Bloch refers to as a cultural surplus ('kultureller Überschuß') presents a very significant one.³¹⁰ In the *Tübinger Erläuterung zur Philosophie* (1963), which presents Bloch's attempt to systematise his philosophical framework, cultural surplus is mentioned in the following passage:

Einleuchtend wirkt hier ein "kultureller Überschuß" über die zeitgenössische Ideologie, und nur er trägt sich auch über die zerfallene Basis und Ideologie durch die Zeiten, macht so das Substrat späterer Nachreife und Erbbare aus. Dies Substrat aber ist utopischer Nature.³¹¹

³⁰⁸ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 1604.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid., p. 170.

³¹¹ Bloch, *Tübinger Einleitung in die Philosophie*, GA, Vol. 13, p. 101.

In this passage Bloch speaks of cultural surplus in relation to the two traditional Marxian categories of (economic) basis and ideology, or, more generally, the superstructure. For Marx, a certain society can be understood adequately in terms of these two categories. Adorno retains them, although revises their relation to each other, by giving more prominence to the superstructure. For Bloch, however, these need to be complemented by the third category of cultural surplus. Cultural surplus amounts to those social features or practices that are captured neither by the concepts of economic basis or ideology. What Bloch furthermore points out is that, unlike economic basis or ideology, which over time decay, cultural surplus persists, that is, remains unchanged. In this sense, as something that remains constant, and thus common to various different societies, this surplus is posited as somehow universal, fundamental or essential to humanity itself.

What immediately arises is a massive common sense reproach. How can this fundamentality or essentiality hold for surplus itself? Is not a surplus defined by its superfluity, its non-essentiality, as that which is superfluous, in excess of an essence? This common understanding of the concepts of surplus and essence are, however, not applicable to Bloch's philosophy. In this case, one is not to think of essence as something that *really* is there, as completed and developed, full and fixed, but rather as something that is not yet fully worked out.

In a review of an earlier book by Bloch, *Spuren* (1930), Adorno criticises precisely this essential dimension to Bloch's utopian thinking, arguing that it is too encompassing, too general, and thus bereft of any use or meaning. Roughly speaking, 'trace' ('Spur') is Bloch's word for indications or manifestations of the cultural surplus, as well our experiences in which we become aware of something utopian. From a philosophical point of view, Adorno considered this concept to be effectively useless:

Denn wie es nichts zwischen Himmel und Erde gibt, was nicht
psychoanalytisch als Symbol für Sexuelles beschlagnahmt werden könnte, so

gibt es nichts, was nicht ebenso zur Symbolintention, zur Blochschen Spur taugte, und dies Alles grenzt ans Nichts.³¹²

Adorno's indictment, however, conceals a very important sense of Bloch's concept of utopia and, correspondingly, of that of Bloch's conception of utopian thinking. As Adorno himself was well aware, Bloch revises the concept of utopia as an ontological category, a category he calls the 'Not-Yet' ('das Noch-Nicht'). Cat Moir highlights this central operator of Bloch's as 'a drive or tendency within the fabric of reality itself', and furthermore as 'a tendency' which is aimed 'towards the achievement of ultimate perfection'.³¹³ For Bloch, reality as such is utopian in the sense of being literally not yet "there". If utopia as this Not-Yet is constitutive of our reality at the ontological, most fundamental level, it is then by no means surprising that Bloch sees it manifested in all human practices.

Bloch's insistence on the ubiquitous presence of utopian thinking across a diverse set of human practices does not, however, preclude a conception of utopian thinking specifically as a philosophical practice, that is the activity of utopian thinking in which philosophers, more precisely Marxist philosophers or Critical Theorists, are to engage. In fact, the core of Bloch's interest lies in Marxist philosophy, and it is clear that one of Bloch's ultimate goals was to revise it by enriching and strengthening its utopian current. This implies that Bloch must have been interested in what utopian thinking as a philosophical practice could look like. To see what Bloch's idea of this might have been, I look first, as I have done with Adorno and Marx, at his own pursuits of imaging a utopian society.³¹⁴ Subsequent to Bloch's practice of utopian thinking I then turn to his theoretical reflections in this pursuit.³¹⁵

³¹² Adorno, 'Blochs Spuren', *Noten zur Literatur*, pp. 243-46 (p. 244).

³¹³ Cat Moir, 'Ernst Bloch - Who was he and Key Contribution: *The Principle of Hope*', in *SAGE Handbook of Critical Theory*, ed. by Beverley Best, Werner Bonefeld and Chris O'Kane (SAGE, forthcoming).

³¹⁴ Here I apply an already defined notion of utopian practice to Bloch philosophy. This approach could be considered problematic as it is likely to significantly narrow down the utopian practices that could be identified in Bloch's philosophy in the first place.

³¹⁵ Here I sharply distinguish between theory and practice of utopian thinking, which might seem unjustified given that the context in consideration is Critical Theory, an intellectual tradition which is distinctively defined by the softening of this dualism. This, however, does

The warm and cold streams of Marxism

Given the reputation of Bloch as both a Marxist and an advocate of utopian thinking, his readers might expect to find in his writings an advance on Marx's vision of the communist society, that is, a more developed or a more complete specification of its structure and function. What Bloch called Marxism presented the core of his interests. As many of his contemporaries with shared political views Bloch considered that Marxism needed to regain its progress-facilitating momentum. In the decade before the First World War, Georges Sorel construed the problem of the orthodox Marxism in terms of its insufficient emphasis on the redemptive, captivating and irrational forces, as opposed to the scientific and objective ones. Famously, the concept of myth was the one through which Sorel posited his solution for a more effective Marxism.³¹⁶ Similarly to Sorel, Bloch highlighted the lack of utopian thinking as the key flaw of Marxism that needs to be attended to. Whereas his very first philosophical work, *Geist der Utopie*, which was in its first edition published in 1918, frames utopia as the central concept, it was his later writings which integrated it with the Marxist theory. Like Benjamin, Bloch too was in his youth not yet familiar with the works of Marx.³¹⁷ In the 1920s Bloch begins to investigate Marxism itself, adopting its terminology and point of view. *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* (1935), a book which, *prima facie*, reads as a contemporary analysis of the rise of National Socialism Bloch asserts his Marxist perspective: in its preface Bloch notes that 'the tenor of this pages, the position from which things are examined, is specifically Marxist'.³¹⁸ In this explicit embrace of the Marxist perspective, he is, however, at the same time critical of it. In the same preface Bloch identifies 'a particular Marxist problem'.³¹⁹ He contends that Marxism has overlooked 'an element of an older, romantic contradiction to capitalism, which misses things in present-day life and longs for something vaguely different', a utopian element to which Bloch here refers to also as 'Irratio', and which overlaps significantly with his

not mean that all theory is equally practical and all practice equally theoretical. The writings by critical theorists can still be differentiated as being more theoretical or more practical.

³¹⁶ Georges Sorel, *Reflections on violence*, ed. by Jeremy Jennings (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

³¹⁷ Hudson, *The Marxist philosophy of Ernst Bloch*, p. 7.

³¹⁸ Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, GA, Vol. 4, p. 15.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

later concept of cultural surplus.³²⁰ Instead of cordoning off this surplus, Bloch suggests, Marxism must examine its particular contradictions from case to case and occupy their territory.³²¹ This criticism of the lack of utopianism in Marxism is most clearly formulated in an interview Bloch gave in 1965 upon receiving a cultural prize from the German Trade Union Federation:

Es geht aber um Perspektiven, die über einen nächsten Fünfjahrplan hinausgehen, um ein Wohin und Wozu der ganzen Freiheitsbewegung — das ist im Marxismus ungenügend ausgeführt. Marx hat einen berechtigten Horror vor dem utopischen Ausmalen von Zukunft gehabt. Er hat keine social-fiction machen wollen. Infolgedessen hat er nur einen privaten Ausdruck: klassenlose Gesellschaft. Aber keinen Sprung, der aus dem Reich der Notwendigkeit ins Reich der Freiheit reicht, von der Basis einer beherrschten Notwendigkeit aus.³²²

In this reply Bloch points to the deficiency of Marxism — it insufficiently develops the long-term goals of where and towards what the socialist society is headed. However, in this instance Bloch discusses not only Marxism, as an intellectual tradition that draws on Marx's own ideas, but refers explicitly to Marx's own thought. Whereas this passage should not be taken to represent fully the complex view Bloch held with respect to the place of utopia in Marx, it does clearly indicate one important side to this view, corresponding to the general scholarly consensus I outlined in the first chapter, that Marx provided no comprehensive account of his ideal society. And although Bloch observes that Marx's hostility to offer such an account was justified, it does, in his view, clearly present a shortcoming in Marx's thinking.

Comments such as these lead us to expect that Bloch mitigated this shortcoming by supplying an account of the communist society. This, however, is not the case. As Wayne Hudson notes: 'Bloch was not a social utopian of any standard sort. He

³²⁰ Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, p. 16.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Bloch, 'Über ungelöste Aufgaben der sozialistischen Theorie', *Tendenz-Latenz-Utopie*, p. 202.

devised no ideal society'.³²³ In fact, just like Marx, Bloch never drafted a systematic, structured or detailed outline of his utopia.

Bloch's — as well as Marx's — indications of how utopian society will look are rather limited in length, and they are scattered throughout his corpus. At the same time there are, however, many marked differences between Marx's and Bloch's remarks on the content of the utopian society: first, Bloch's elucidations of a utopian society are 'warmer' than Marx's, to use a Blochian term derived from the distinction he drew between cold and warm streams of Marxism ('Kälte- und Wärmestrom im Marxismus').³²⁴ Although Bloch most often discusses this pair of concepts of the cold and warm streams in the context of Marxism, they do, in his philosophy take on a more general meaning, as anthropological categories, as two attitudes, perhaps best thought as two distinct stances that humans can adopt in their relation to the world.³²⁵ At the most basic level, the cold and warm streams correspond to the rational and affective sides of our relation to the world. In her account of the cold and warm streams in their specific relation to Marxism, Silvia Mazzini highlights the tools of 'ideology critique, precise analysis of the economic and historical conditions, detection of false consciousness' as characteristic of the cold stream and 'enthusiasm, moral determination, and the work of objective imagination' as the features distinctive of the warm Marxism.³²⁶ Importantly, this distinction should not be understood normatively, in the sense that Bloch considered one to be superior to the other. For Bloch, both streams are 'equally important', and effective only when working 'together, in union'.³²⁷ Bloch's ideal form of Marxism is just as cold as it is warm. Bloch never explicitly described Marx's own writings in terms of this distinction. To the extent, however, that Marx, as well as Engels, espoused their studies of the past and present socio-economic conditions, and their analysis in the form of scientific models, and more generally, that what they considered to be an

³²³ Wayne Hudson, 'Bloch and a Philosophy of the Proterior', in *Privatization of Hope*, ed. by Thompson and Žižek, pp. 21-37 (p. 24).

³²⁴ Bloch first introduced these concepts in *Erbshaft dieser Zeit*. He advances them later in *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (see especially the section 'Das "nach Möglichkeit" und das "in Möglichkeit Seiende", Kälte- und Wärmestrom im Marxismus', pp. 235-42) and *Experimentum Mundi*.

³²⁵ Bloch, *Das Materialismusproblem, seine Geschichte und Substanz*, GA, Vol. 7, p. 372.

³²⁶ Silvia Mazzini, 'Kältestrom – Wärmestrom', in *Bloch-Wörterbuch*, ed. by Dietschy et al., pp. 224-232 (p. 224).

³²⁷ Bloch, *Materialismus Problem*, p. 372.

objective application of our rational faculties is the only viable way of obtaining knowledge, we can perceive Marx's writings as dominated by the cold stream. Yet, the warm stream is in Marx not undetectable in, for instance, the *Manifesto*. This text does have a specific intensity and emotional appeal, and illustrates the idea of communism 'through imagery, through tempo, through expressions', which Bloch perceived as typical of the warm stream.³²⁸ Moreover, Bloch recognises the concept of the realm of freedom ('Reich der Freiheit') as highly significant for Marx.³²⁹ This concept Bloch perceived not only as another label for the communist society but for the ultimate communist society, the most distant conception of it. This distance or the long-term perspective is another characteristic of the warm stream. In a section in *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* in which Bloch elaborates this distinction, he contends that warm Marxism:

geht auf den Horizon im Sinn *unverstellter, ungemessener Weite*, im Sinn des noch unerschöpft und unverwirklicht Möglichen. Das ergibt dann freilich erst Aussicht im eigentlichen Sinne, das ist: Aussicht aufs Eigentliche, auf das Totum des Geschehenden und zu Betreibenden, auf ein nicht nur jeweils vorliegendes, sondern gesamthistorisch-utopisches Totum.³³⁰

Whatever the relative significance of this long-distant horizon in Marx according to Bloch was, it is clear that he perceived it as diminished in the later developments of Marxism, especially in the Soviet one. In particular, in the *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, a text in which Bloch for the first time introduced the distinction of warm and cold streams, in its emphasis on the short-termism and with it on the quantitative planning, policies, as well as more in general on the economy and the mechanistic interpretation of history that underlay its prioritisation, Bloch perceived Soviet Marxism as being monopolised by the cold stream. In contrast, Bloch's own variety of Marxism appears to be dominated by the warm stream: it is centred not on the objective world but on the living and feeling individual, its content is arrived at not through the means of reason but through those of hopes, wishes and dreams, its language is expressionist and poetic, rather than theoretical and analytical. It

³²⁸ Bloch, *Gespräche mit Ernst Bloch*, ed. by Rainer Traub and Harald Wieser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), p. 222.

³²⁹ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 149.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

belongs to the realm of the 'human-qualitative' rather than of the 'economic-quantitative'.³³¹ It is almost as if Bloch's Marxism is too warm according to his own standards — effective Marxism was supposed to combine the two streams — but perhaps his overemphasised warmth was intentional in that he attempted to illustrate positively the faults he found with Soviet, and to some degree with Marx's own, Marxism.

The government officials in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) where Bloch moved in 1949 to take up a professorship and the directorship of the 'Institut für Philosophie' in Leipzig certainly rendered Bloch's Marxism as too removed from its official, Communist Party's interpretation. Bloch was the only one among the Critical Theorists who, upon their interwar exile, first in Europe and then the United States, returned to the Eastern Bloc of their native land. Bloch was unique in his belief that the Soviet Union even at that time still presented a viable socialist alternative to the then existing capitalism. Other Critical Theorists denounced the Soviet Union already in the 1930s after the Moscow purge trials.³³² Bloch, however, considered that one's hope always requires an outlet, that it needs to be invested in a certain political alternative. Whatever reservations he might have held towards the Soviet Union, these needed to be secondary to endorsing and defending its supposedly genuine commitment to the principles of socialism. In his lecture upon assuming his (first) academic post Bloch observed that those who want to follow truth must go with Marx in the realm he opened, and that there is not other truth that remains.³³³ Of course, besides this theoretical principle, Bloch's decision to move to the GDR was founded on some more pragmatic considerations incited also by the conducive publishing opportunities.³³⁴ Although Bloch's version of Marxism was since he first conceived it highly idiosyncratic, and never fully aligned with the Soviet one, the discrepancies between the two gained significance only once Bloch started publicly expressing his criticism of the regime in the mid 1950s. Following Khrushchev's acknowledgement of the Stalinist purges during the 20th Party Congress in February 1956, Bloch became more open about his concerns of the really existing

³³¹ Bloch, *Materialismus Problem*, p. 374.

³³² Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 20.

³³³ Bloch, 'Universität, Marxismus, Philosophie (Antrittsvorlesung in Leipzig, Mai 1940)', *Philosophische Aufsätze zur Objektiven Phantasie*, GA, Vol. 10, pp. 270-91 (p. 276).

³³⁴ Zudeick, *Der Hintern des Teufels: Ernst Bloch*, pp. 184-5.

socialism, namely its restrictions on individual freedom and its dogmatism.³³⁵ Then the leading Party officials came to recognise Bloch's philosophy as revisionist, even as non-Marxist.³³⁶ The core flaw that the Party found with Bloch was his emphasis on the individual, as opposed to the collective, that is, the Party, and the role that the individual plays in effecting historical change, as opposed to it being already determined by the objective conditions. This subjectivism is another aspect of the warm strand of Marxism, and one that the Party eventually rendered unacceptable, and, as a result, in 1957 not only discharged Bloch from his academic post, but almost completely disabled his research, writing and publishing.³³⁷

How Bloch's and Marx's references to utopian society fit into Bloch's schema of cold versus warm kinds of Marxism presents a first difference among them I consider here. The second difference regards the scope of their references to the utopian society: which of the authors' utterances are those that we could in the first place consider as attempting to reveal something substantial about the nature or the form of a utopian society; which of their remarks should we consider in our reconstruction of their ideas of a utopian society? As I have established in the first chapter, in the case of Marx, scholars are relatively united in how his idea of utopia is to be reconstructed from his writings: above all this consists of assembling positive references Marx makes in relation to communism in the *Manifesto* and the 'Kritik des Gothaer Programms'. The Young Marx scholars, including Daniel Brudney and David Leopold, in addition to these texts emphasise Marx's philosophical anthropology as an essential ingredient to his utopian thinking. In the case of Bloch no such consensus has yet been established. I thus adopt below a similar approach as has been taken with Marx, and reconstruct the content of Bloch's utopia via what I call a key signifier of their utopias, in Marx's case the concept of communism and in Bloch's the one of 'Heimat'.³³⁸

³³⁵ Alexander Amberger, 'Ernst Bloch in der DDR', *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, 61:4 (2013), 561-76 (p. 565).

³³⁶ Cf. Arno Münster, *Ernst Bloch: eine politische Biographie* (Hamburg: CEP Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 2012), p. 282; Silvia Markun, *Ernst Bloch in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1977), pp. 95-6.

³³⁷ Cf. Münster, *Ernst Bloch*, pp. 275-302.

³³⁸ The German word 'Heimat' is most often translated into English as 'home' and 'homeland'. Neither of these translations, however, captures adequately the meaning of 'Heimat', which is why I stick to using the German term. Another term that Bloch appears to use

Bloch's utopian society: 'Heimat'

It should be noted that this approach is likely to imply a restricted understanding of Bloch's vision of the utopian society. As I have pointed out a large proportion of *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* amounts to an assembly of utopian wishes that have already been articulated by others in the past. A function of this assembly is to make evident the ubiquity of utopian thinking in human lives. But perhaps could all these utopian wishes also be considered as representing or pointing to Bloch's own utopia? As Gerd Koch observes, Bloch's *Prinzip Hoffnung* depicts the already known wishful images, and, moreover, revises and sketches them anew.³³⁹ Where, however, does the line lie? How can we distinguish between those images that are already known and exist, that is, the utopian ideas which Bloch duplicates, includes them in his assembly in a more or less unmodified way, and those images that he revises and modifies? Of course, no line neatly divides these different types of utopian wishes, but they could nevertheless be loosely distinguished. To do so, however, given the volume of these images, much philological research would have to be conducted. I thus focus only on those images which can plausibly be related directly to the concept of *Heimat*.

Heimat certainly presents a variation on Marx's idea of communism. For example, Bloch describes the desired future as 'another world beyond hardship', as one 'without expropriation and alienation, in real democracy'.³⁴⁰ This phrase of real democracy is also a political one, as the democracy that exists in the 'the really existing socialism' ('Realsozialismus') within the Eastern Bloc countries and the Soviet Union, as opposed to that prevailing in the Western ones. Another, less well-known metaphor of Marx's demarcating the communist society, is present in Bloch's work to an even greater extent than those of non-alienation, non-exploitation and democracy. Marx's metaphor too originates in his 'Ökonomisch-philosophischen

synonymously with that of *Heimat* is 'Zuhause' (Koch, 'Heimat', in *Bloch-Wörterbuch*, ed. by Dietschy et al., p. 178). For a discussion of difficulties of translating *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, including the concept of *Heimat* see Françoise Wuilmart, 'Problematik beim Übersetzen von Ernst Blochs "Das Prinzip Hoffnung" ins Französische', in *Bloch-Almanach*, Ernst-Bloch-Archiv, 5 (1985), 204–222 (p. 217). Although Wuilmart discusses the translation of Bloch specifically into French, his ideas are informing more generally.

³³⁹ Gerd Koch, 'Heimat', in *Bloch-Wörterbuch*, ed. by Dietschy et al., pp. 168–89 (p. 174).

³⁴⁰ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, pp. 310; 1628.

Manuskripte', more precisely, in the phrase of 'the perfect essential unity of man with nature, the true resurrection of nature, the accomplished naturalism of man and the accomplished humanism of nature'.³⁴¹ Bloch develops this idea of 'the naturalization of man, humanization of nature' into his key motif of *Heimat*, positing it as 'the goal', and, further as 'the content of the realm of freedom'.³⁴² Although the concept of *Heimat* was made infamous by National Socialism, its roots lie earlier in history, in the Romanticism of writers such as Novalis, Hölderlin, Schelling and Herder. In this epoch *Heimat* unites multiple dissatisfactions with the onset of modernisation, industrialisation, rationalisation urbanisation and in turn aims at reestablishing an idealised, local-based, rural, simple, pre-modern order.³⁴³ *Heimat* presented for Bloch the epitome of the remnants of the past that need to be salvaged for present political purposes, which, in his view, meant assimilating this concept into the Marxist register. As the very final word of *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, *Heimat* is Bloch's answer to the opening lines of this work — 'Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going? What are we waiting for? What awaits us?'.³⁴⁴ *Heimat* can thus be taken as Bloch's name for his utopian society. Later in the introduction of *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* Bloch refers to *Heimat* as 'positive Utopikum' and as 'the All' ('das Alles').³⁴⁵ The key idiosyncrasy of *Heimat* as Bloch's utopia is the already mentioned idea of 'socialized humanity, allied with a nature that is mediated with it'.³⁴⁶ For Bloch the figure of *Heimat* stands for the state 'of fulfilled human beings themselves and their environment fully mediated with these images'.³⁴⁷ Bloch further describes the relationship between nature and humanity in *Heimat* as one of 'co-productivity'.³⁴⁸ Bloch does contend that the creation of such a relationship between nature and humanity would require a new kind of technology, one which we would probably today call 'green technology', and which Bloch once refers to as the 'the bosom of a friend'.³⁴⁹

³⁴¹ Marx, 'Ökonomisch-philosophischen Manuskripte', p. 538.

³⁴² Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 241.

³⁴³ Cf. Peter Blicke, *Heimat: A Critical Theory of the German Idea of Homeland* (New York: Camden House, 2002).

³⁴⁴ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 1.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 11.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 334.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 15.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 802.

³⁴⁹ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 782.

Apart from some short references to technology Bloch does not offer other details on the content of this reconciled humanity with nature. Gerhard Koch subscribes to this view by observing that *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* does not make evident what the content of *Heimat* is.³⁵⁰ Yet, Bloch does indeed substantiate the concept of *Heimat* even if not by describing its aspects and characteristics concretely. ‘Something which shines into the childhood of all and in which no one has yet been:’ is the most concise Bloch’s formulation of this substantiation of *Heimat*.³⁵¹ By examining closely two fragments of this contention, which too features in the final passage of *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, we can grasp what Bloch could have meant by it. The first fragment corresponds to the second half of the sentence, namely ‘where no one has yet been’. Although Bloch uses a location-relative pronoun ‘where’, *Heimat* is here not a spatial term. Somewhat analogous to the temporalisation of the concept of utopia in the 19th century, Bloch sees *Heimat* as a place that exists in time but not in space. The spatial dimension of *Heimat* is one that is present in the colloquial usage of the term today, as well as in one that was not only present but crucial to how it was used by the National Socialists, where it was synonymous with ‘Deutschland’, the territory of the German nation-state.³⁵² In Bloch’s view, however, as Francesca Vidal notes, ‘Heimat is not a place’.³⁵³ The analogy to the modification undergone by the concept of utopia is, however, a slight simplification of Bloch’s revision of the concept of *Heimat*. An important difference regards Bloch’s idiosyncratic conception of time according to which the past, present and the future are not simply phases which consecutively displace one another. Bloch’s temporalisation of the concept of *Heimat* is not a transfer from a place we cannot reach (a distant island) into a time we cannot access (the future). Instead it is a transfer into the time that cannot (yet) be fully accessed. That means that while *Heimat* is already partially here in the now — we had some sort of experience of it in the childhood — it is also partially not here — no one has actually been there.

³⁵⁰ Koch, ‘Heimat’, in *Bloch-Wörterbuch*, ed. by Dietschy et al., p. 174.

³⁵¹ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 1628.

³⁵² Blicke, *Heimat*, p. 47.

³⁵³ Francesca Vidal, ‘Sein wie Utopie: Zur Kategorie Heimat in der Philosophie von Ernst Bloch’, in *“Utopien haben einen Fahrplan”: Gestaltungsräume für eine zukunftsfähige Praxis*, ed. by Klaus Kufeld and Peter Zudeick (Mörsingen-Talheim: Talheimer, 2000), pp. 40-49 (p. 45).

The second fragment of the contention under concern is the word 'all'. *Heimat* is for Bloch something that has appeared to all, that is, to all human beings. What Bloch is saying here is that our ideas of what utopia is, of the better world we wish to see realised, are shared, at least to a certain extent. In other words, Bloch professes a certain universality or transcendence of norms of what the right and the good society is. We could perhaps say that Bloch's *Heimat* presents some kind a universal core of utopian ideas expressed throughout history. Bloch contends that this idea of *Heimat* was something that Marx's himself touched on, even if he did not develop it fully. In *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* Bloch quotes a line that Marx included in a letter he wrote to Arnold Ruge, namely that:

Es wird sich [...] zeigen, daß die Welt längst den Traum von einer Sache besitzt, von dem sie nur das Bewußtsein besitzen muß, um sie wirklich zu besitzen. Es wird sich dann zeigen, daß es sich nicht um einen großen Gedankenstrich zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft handelt, sondern um die *Vollziehung* der Gedanken der Vergangenheit.³⁵⁴

The concept of *Heimat* is also not antithetical to the tradition of Critical Theory itself. More specifically, the contention of the existence of a transcendental conception of the good, and moreover, as I explained in the previous paragraph, as a conception that is at every point in time in some form entailed in the individuals' expressions, is constitutive of Benjamin's thought. It is precisely this idea which is implicit in one of this tradition's paradigmatic passages, an excerpt of Benjamin's 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte':

Die Vergangenheit führt einen heimlichen Index mit, durch den sie auf die Erlösung verwiesen wird [...] dann besteht eine geheime Verabredung zwischen den gewesenen Geschlechtern und unserem. Dann sind wir auf der Erde erwartet worden. Dann ist uns wie jedem Geschlecht, das vor uns war, eine schwache messianische Kraft mitgegeben, an welche die Vergangenheit Anspruch hat.³⁵⁵

³⁵⁴ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 1613.

³⁵⁵ Benjamin, 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte', in *Walter Benjamin Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 1, pp. 691-706 (pp. 693-4).

In this passage Benjamin contends that 'die Erlösung', that is, the current redemptive, revolutionary act, the transformation of the existing society into the utopian one is only a continuation of the already attempted past revolutions. The attempts at transforming a society into a better one all have something in common, they are joined by carrying what Benjamin termed 'the secret index' ('heimlicher Index'), and what Bloch referred to as 'the invariant of direction' ('Invarianz der Richtung').³⁵⁶

In fact, Benjamin's conception of utopian thinking had much in common with Bloch's. For Benjamin, everyday life serves as the material for utopia, and no preconceived plan or set of universal concepts can suffice for its determination. More specifically, utopia derives from what Benjamin called 'the debris of history' — the look of a forgotten boulevard, postage stamps, children's literature, eating, collecting books, the euphoria of hashish, memories of revolutionaries shooting at the clocks.³⁵⁷ As Peter Thompson notes, Bloch and Benjamin took 'from the Lurianic Kabbalah the idea of the daily manifestations of hope as surplus "shards of light", left over from the creation of the word as negativity'.³⁵⁸ There is, however, an important distinction between Benjamin's and Bloch's understandings of these 'surplus shards of light'. Whereas for Benjamin they manifested themselves in the forgotten, repressed and the neglected histories of the world, for Bloch their presence was, corresponding to his view of the ubiquity of utopian thinking, not limited to these, supposedly, more marginal side histories. It is also important to mention that while Bloch's early writings resemble those of Benjamin in its expressionistic style and the disregard of an attempt to substantiate his new ideas with a new conceptual framework, Bloch does later provide them with an ontological basis, something that Benjamin never managed or attempted to do.

³⁵⁶ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, pp. 355; 1565.

³⁵⁷ Benjamin, 'Über den Begriff der Geschichte', p. 697.

³⁵⁸ Thompson, 'Religion, Utopia and the Metaphysics of Contingency', in *Privatization of Hope*, ed. by Thompson and Žižek, pp. 82-105 (p. 84).

The utopian core: 'Invariant of Direction'

Bloch's notion of invariant of direction appears in *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* also in the form of the phrases 'Invarianz', 'Invarianzinhalt', 'Invariante', and finally as 'Unum necessarium' (the one necessary).³⁵⁹ For instance:

Invarianz eines stets Gemeinten oder utopischen Endes, das in der Richtung ist, diese einzig gültige Invarianz [...], sie ist Unum necessarium in der Richtung, ist überall identisch angelegtes Element der utopischen Endzustands.³⁶⁰

Here Bloch states that the invariant of direction is founded on something that has been constantly intended ('eines stets Gemeinten'). This is rather synonymous with one of Benjamin's remarks from the above passage, namely that the post-revolutionary world is something that has always been signified, or pointed at by the past, by means of its secret index. The meaning of the notion of invariant of direction Bloch elaborates further in another passage from *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*:

Die Invariante dieser Richtung führt am Schluß [...] auf den einzigen Archetyp, der nichts Archaisches an sich hat. Das ist: auf den *rein utopischen Archetyp, der in der Evidenz der Nähe wohnt, auf des Summum bonum als ein noch unbekanntes, allüberbietendes*. Der Archetyp: höchstes Gut ist der Invarianzinhalt des glücklichsten Staunens, sein Besitz wäre der, welcher verwandelt im Augenblick und eben als dieser Augenblick, zu seinem völlig gelösten Daß.³⁶¹

It should have by now become evident that the invariant of direction is closely tied to the utopian, the highest good ('*Summum bonum*', '*höchstes Gut*'). This passage, however, additionally touches on another aspect of the invariant of direction that I have not discussed so far, namely, the knowability of its content, or better, its unknowability: Bloch plainly asserts that this content is not yet known. That is, we

³⁵⁹ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, pp. 557; 355; 921; 255; 336.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 336.

³⁶¹ Ibid., p. 355.

do not know what the universal norms and values of a good society are, those universal aspects of it that we all share. The underlying reason Bloch gives us is also rather: we do not know what this utopian society is because it has not yet been realised: 'the final state' has not yet been realised, 'neither as the negative of pessimism and its Nothing, nor as the positive of optimism and its All'.³⁶² This reason conforms with the basic materialistic contention, the very contention to which both Marx and Adorno subscribed: as material beings, humans are embedded and thus conditioned by their material circumstances which cannot be cut loose, the mind cannot pretend it can assume a position outside this material world in which it would be free to work out, or find an already developed conception of what the truly good society is. Similar to Marx and Adorno, Bloch denounces the idealist contention that concepts, ideas and thought are self-determining entities carrying meanings that remain unconnected to the existing material reality. Bloch's materialist stance explains why his figure of *Heimat* remains uninhabited by specific features characterising this society.

As we see now, Bloch does concur with Adorno that we do cannot know in the present how the utopian society of the future looks. However, at least two significant differences can and should be identified between their understandings of this assertion. The first difference is that, unlike in Adorno, in Bloch the idea that we cannot know the future utopian society does not result in the *Utopieverbot*. On the contrary — for Bloch it is not the case that we *should not* be envisaging the future, it is rather the opposite: this is what we *should* be doing. In their radio conversation Adorno contended that one may not cast a picture of utopia. Bloch, by distinction, insisted on the *need* to cast a picture of it.

For now, I leave this view on the side, and come back to it in the final chapter. I first elaborate on the second difference between Adorno's and Bloch's positions on the impossibility of utopian thinking, namely that Bloch does not render this impossibility as absolute. That is, in Bloch's view, it is not the case that nothing at all can be known about the utopian society of the future: while he maintains that its fundamental tenets (e.g. the harmonious relation between humanity and its

³⁶² Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, pp. 354-5.

environment) or its core values (e.g. freedom) cannot be determined, and elaborated on in any extended way, but some sides, elements or features of the utopian society can be known. We can grasp or comprehend some sides of the invariant of direction, of the absolute utopia itself through our most inner experiences of the world that we can gain by adopting a specific attitude towards it, the attitude Bloch to which refers to as wonder ('Staunen'). These experiences are consciously articulated in different ways, in the wide range of expressions and practices that Bloch counts under his category of utopian thinking, extending from dreams and wishes to paintings and poems. Bloch's own attempt to capture the content of this wondering is a particular literary form, some type of a short narrative of events, which just like the experience of the utopian moment itself carries the name of 'traces'.

Traces — experiences and expressions of utopia

The most accessible account of both of these two meanings of traces Bloch offers in *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*:

Erfahren wurden in diesem Stillehalten allemal knappste *Symbolintentionen eines Überhaupt*, subjektiv zunächst, ja lyristisch scheinend und doch erzphilosophisch in der Sache selbst fundiert, nämlich in einem Aufblitzen von utopischem Endzustand. Solche Erfahrungen eines utopischen Endzustands fixieren ihn gewiß nicht, sonst wären sie keine Erfahrungen bloßer *Symbolintention* und keine utopischen, gar zentralutopischen. Aber sie betreffen in der Tat den *Kern der Latenz*, und zwar als letzte Frage, in sich selbst widerhallend. Diese Frage ist auf keine bereits vorhandene Antwort hin konstruierbar, auf kein irgendwo in der vorhandenen Welt bereits geschichtetes Material beziehbar. Beispiele hierfür sind in dem Buch 'Spuren' gegeben.³⁶³

The basic idea behind traces as *experiences* of utopia is one, which Bloch shares with some non-occidental philosophical systems like Buddhism of Shankya, namely that

³⁶³ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 337.

other-worldliness exists in this world and that we have access to it. In Bloch's own system this is related to the 'the darkness of the lived moment' ('Dunkel des gelebten Augenblick').³⁶⁴ In the above passage Bloch contends that these lived moments are pervaded with the 'utopian final state', which become accessible or visible to us as 'the symbol-intentions of one possibility'. Although these indications of utopia do not determine or fix the utopian society that might actually arise in the future they do capture something substantial about it. Such experiences of utopia are in the very moment they are experienced purely subjective. They are the very first experience of utopia a subject can have, and are thus tied to the subject. It is therefore also not a coincidence that Bloch chose his book *Spuren* to feature as the first volume in his collected works. However, once these experiences are reflected on, elaborated, shared with others, some aspects of them do start gaining objective validity. Although I do not elaborate on this contention in this project, this idea of the process through which some at first purely subjective contents are worked through to become something more objective — from these premonitions, to dreams, wishes and then knowledge — is one of important Bloch's contributions.

In that these experiences of the utopia capture it only in bits and pieces they also need to be expressed in a partial, fragmented form. These *articulations* of the experiences of utopia is the second meaning of Bloch's concept of traces. As he notes in the above passage, he provided the examples what he means by these moments in his book *Spuren*. The specific writing style, which merges the poetical with the philosophical, Bloch explored already in his earliest publications, including *Durch die Wüste* (1923) and *Geist der Utopie* (1918). Bloch objected to philosophical thinking in the form of abstract concepts put together in structured theories. In his view, such a way of thinking had too much in common with doctrines and dogmas which have historically been an important means of manipulating the masses. In many of his early writings his preferred way of conveying his ideas, which nevertheless remained profoundly philosophical, was thus the alternative of narratives, stories, images, anecdotes, jokes and reflections. Traces as a literary figure bring these forms together. Another defining aspect of this literary figure is,

³⁶⁴ This motif first appears in the *Geist der Utopie*, and is advanced further in his later works, including *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*. See especially Chapter 20, 'Zusammenfassung: Antizipatorische Beschaffenheit und ihre Pole' (pp. 334-367) in *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*.

as Laura Boella observes, its briefness or shortness.³⁶⁵ According to Bloch, one is in one's experiences of reality most susceptible and open to the 'little things'.³⁶⁶ For Bloch these little things capture some little fragments of the utopia, which he then in turn also himself represents as short fragments. In their brief exposition and in that traces are also intended to convey a certain deeper meaning, they resemble both aphorisms as well as Adorno's constellations and Benjamin's thought-images.

In Bloch's view the content of utopia can be expressed in another, less literary way than via traces, which is related more closely with my project: its concern is utopian thinking which retains some of the qualities of philosophy that are not immanently interchangeable with the artistic ones. Although traces point to many reasons justifying that the line between philosophy and art can be completely permeable, especially when it comes to ultimate questions, like that of utopia, the objective of my project remains the exploration of articulations of utopian society that are less metaphorical, more analytical, less ambivalent, and more easily comprehensible, and to consider the subject of a utopian society more explicitly. The other form of Blochian utopian thinking I investigate here more in detail is more closely related to my interest. This form of utopian thinking grounded in Bloch's concept of 'concrete utopia' ('konkrete Utopie').³⁶⁷ Concrete utopias are images of an ideal society contained in the answers to the question of the "here" and "now", that is to the existing economic, political and social issues. This concept of concrete utopia needs to be distinguished from the invariant of direction, the absolute utopia, the final form of our societies, the *Heimat*. Concrete utopias can perhaps be best comprehended as various pre-forms of *Heimat*, and in that also formative of what *Heimat* will eventually become. Thus Bloch's view that, on the one hand, as I discussed above in relation to the emptiness of Bloch's *Heimat*, we cannot conceptualise the utopian society in any particular way, and on the other, as I claim now, that in fact we can, is not contradictory, as long as we keep the categories of concrete utopia and *Heimat* somewhat separate.

³⁶⁵ Laura Boella, 'Spuren', in *Bloch-Wörterbuch*, ed. by Dietschy et al., pp. 508-13 (p. 512).

³⁶⁶ Bloch, *Spuren*, GA, Vol. 1, p. 16.

³⁶⁷ This phrase appears numerous in *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*. See, e.g., p. 180.

Bloch himself never actually talked explicitly of ‘concrete utopian thinking’ — this is a term I introduce here to describe the form of utopian thinking that can be derived from his concept of concrete utopia. In the very first instance, concrete utopian thinking can be thought of as fusion of one’s premonitions, the glimpses of utopias that arise in one’s most inner experiences, wishes and longings with the existing historical situation and its problems. In the following section I proceed by first untangling the concept of concrete utopia and then consider what concrete utopian thinking could look like more specifically.

Concrete utopian thinking

By the concept of concrete utopia Bloch does not mean an actual utopia, in the material sense, as a perceptible community that would actually exist in our reality. The applicable antonym of concrete utopia in this sense would be ‘abstract utopia’, a merely conceptual representation of a good society. This dualism between the realms of concepts and matter is in general not applicable to Bloch’s philosophical system. Therefore it cannot be applied also to this specific distinction between abstract and concrete utopias. Instead, as Peter Thompson argues, Bloch’s usage of the term concrete should be understood in its Hegelian sense.³⁶⁸ Hegel adopted the terms ‘the concrete’ and ‘concrete’ from the Latin verb *concrecere*, meaning to ‘grow together, condense’ and contrasted it to *abstrahere*, ‘to draw away, remove (something from something else)’.³⁶⁹ For Hegel, then, the concrete presents a point, material and conceptual at the same time, which emerges out of the given reality and embodies it in its totality, effectively bringing together all various strands of the reality. The abstract, on the other hand, entails merely one strand of this reality, and moreover, it embodies this reality by drawing one specific strand or feature away from it, by removing this strand from the totality. Once this strand is abstracted from the totality, it can appear as existing independently, while in truth it cannot really exist as such.

³⁶⁸ Peter Thompson, ‘What Is Concrete about Ernst Bloch’s Concrete Utopia?’, in *Utopia: social theory and the future*, ed. by Michael Hviid Jacobsen and Keith Tester (Farnham; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 33-46 (p. 34).

³⁶⁹ Michael Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p. 29.

Keeping in mind these Hegelian meanings of the concrete and the abstract will help us later on to make sense of concrete and abstract utopian thinking, practices which, as I have mentioned Bloch does not define explicitly. Nonetheless, in relation to the concepts of concrete and abstract utopia, Bloch regularly employs the same set of motives, metaphors and analogies. The motives consonant with abstract utopia are those of dreaminess, clouds and immaturity, whereas those of erudition, advancement, forward motion and maturity appear symbolic of concrete utopia. The following excerpt from *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* brings together these various motives most succinctly:

Hier mithin wäre der nur scheinbar paradoxe Begriff eines Konkret-Utopischen am Platz, das heißt also, eines antizipatorischen, das keinesfalls mit abstrakt-utopischer Träumerei zusammenfällt, auch nicht durch die Unreife des bloß abstrakt-utopischen Sozialismus gerichtet ist. Es bezeichnet gerade die Macht und Wahrheit des Marxismus, daß er die Wolke in den Träumen nach vorwärts vertrieben, aber die Feuersäule in ihnen nicht ausgelöscht, sondern durch Konkretheit verstärkt hat.³⁷⁰

What this passage immediately makes evident is that the distinction between abstract and concrete utopia presents, for Bloch, a certain dichotomy. Bloch states that the concept of concrete utopia by no means coincides with those of 'abstract-utopian dreams' ('abstrakt-utopischer Träumerei') and 'abstract-utopian socialism'. Bloch contrasts the latter with Marxism which can be taken as overlapping with concrete utopia.³⁷¹ In the passage it further becomes apparent that despite the dichotomous relation between abstract and concrete utopia, Bloch perceives the latter as related, or more specifically as developing out of the former. Bloch's dichotomy of abstract and concrete utopia thus need to be understood as a dialectical relationship. It seems as if the content of abstract utopias is taken as the initial basis for the advancement of a concrete utopia. What concrete utopia

³⁷⁰ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, pp. 165-6.

³⁷¹ As Ruth Levitas notes Bloch's distinction can be interpreted as an advance of Marx and Engels' own differentiation between their version of socialism and that supplied by Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen. Cf. Ruth Levitas, 'Educated Hope: Ernst Bloch on Abstract and Concrete Utopia', *Utopian Studies*, 1:2 (1990), 13-26 (p. 16).

preserves is 'pillar of fires' ('die Feuersäule'), something that dreams manage to capture. This basis is, then, strengthened and becomes more powerful in the concept of concrete utopia. As Bloch posits, the key of this strength and power lies in concreteness, or perhaps, what might be a more intelligible way to put it, in the process of concretisation. This passage, however, is silent on the question of what this concreteness might be, what the process of concretisation entails, in other words — how is an abstract utopia transformed into a concrete one?

One of the very first further explications of what this concreteness might entail Bloch provides in *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* and concerns a well-known passage written by a 19th century Russian writer Dmitry Pisarev in which different kinds of dreams are considered.³⁷² This passage was popularised by Lenin who quoted it at length in his pamphlet 'What is to be Done?'. Whereas Pisarev rendered dreams as a highly significant stimulus which would 'induce man to undertake and complete extensive and strenuous work', he recognised that only a specific kind of dreams has this effect that is purely positive.³⁷³ Pisarev recognised that some dreams can also have negative repercussions, namely, that they may 'distort or paralyze labour power'.³⁷⁴ The purely beneficial dreams, however, cause no harm, and their distinguishing characteristics, Pisarev writes, is that 'the person dreaming believes seriously in his dream', 'attentively observes life', 'compares his observations with his castles in the air' and 'works conscientiously for the achievement of his fantasies'.³⁷⁵ In the case of these dreams, Pisarev continues, there is still a 'rift' separating them from 'reality' but this rift he does not recognise as problematic. The key question to be answered here is how these two kinds of rifts differ from each other. It seems that the rift devoid of danger is narrower than the other one, in the sense that life and dreams are brought closer to each other. The good kind of dreams are arrived at by fusing them with our experiences of our reality, or, as Pisarev writes, with our observations of life. Later on in *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, in an explicit elucidation of the difference, this time explicitly in terms of the difference between concrete and abstract utopias Bloch himself uses very similar terminology, contending that it is

³⁷² Bloch quotes Pisarev in *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 9.

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

‘the point of contact between dreams and life’ which furnishes dreams as a concrete utopia.³⁷⁶ Without this point of contact, dreams yield only abstract utopia.³⁷⁷

Bloch makes a similar remark in his inaugural lecture upon assuming his second professorship, this time in West Germany, in Tübingen. From 1956 onwards, the year in which Bloch’s never perfectly loyal allegiance to the Communist Party took on a new character — as he pleaded publicly for a more humanist and democratic alternative to the Soviet model of socialism, denouncing its dogmatic, dictatorial and violent character — the Party increasingly came to censor his work and placed other restrictions on his activities. When an opportunity arose to leave the GDR, Bloch took it, and was subsequently, in 1961, granted political asylum in West Germany. In the same year he obtained a professorial post in Tübingen, where he delivered his famous inaugural lecture on the disappointment of hope. This lecture illuminates how it was that Bloch’s political outlooks had not been reversed by his disillusionment with the Soviet experiment. Once in the West, Bloch continued to believe in socialist principles and support other socialist inspired movements, including the 1968 student protests.³⁷⁸ As he explained in this lecture, disappointment is inherent to hope — ‘hope must be unconditionally disappointable’ — and disappointment is in fact necessary for the eventual fulfillment of the content of hope, in Bloch’s case of socialism.³⁷⁹ If what we hope for was always to be fulfilled, then it would not be the affect of hoping but something else that we are engaged in, the alternative affect, Bloch suggests, would be ‘confidence’.³⁸⁰ Because hope is ‘open in the forward direction, and is instead to repetition committed to the changeable, it must ‘contain in itself also an element of chance’.³⁸¹ This element of chance then in turn means there is no certainty about that the content of hope will actually be realised.

The other feature of hope Bloch addresses in this lecture is related to concrete utopian thinking. He warns that when ‘even serious expressions of faith’ is brought

³⁷⁶ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 165.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ Hudson, *The Marxist philosophy of Ernst Bloch*, p. 17.

³⁷⁹ Bloch, ‘Kann Hoffnung enttäuscht werden? Eröffnungs-Vorlesung, Tübingen 1961’, *Literarische Aufsätze*, GA, Vol. 9, pp. 385-92.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 387.

³⁸¹ Ibid., p. 387.

to bear 'on the course of real events *abstractly* and without constant *control*', it is liable to lead 'to their opposite'.³⁸² In place of this kind of utopian thinking, Bloch calls for 'well-founded hope, mediated, guiding hope' which contains a 'timetable' and 'appropriate skepticism'.³⁸³

Taking these cues, and further pursuing meanings of concrete and abstract utopia, I suggest that concrete utopian thinking can be thought of as conceptual representations of a utopian society that are differentiated, detailed, comprehensive and particular. This is in accordance with for example Bloch's account of concrete utopia as 'the most powerful telescope of the polished utopian consciousness'.³⁸⁴ The emphasis on particularity and specification, in opposition to vagueness and generality, is however not the only feature of concrete utopian thinking. A conception of utopia that is full of specific details could still in fact be classified as abstract utopian thinking. In fact, utopian fiction, which, among others, Ruth Levitas reads as an instance of what Bloch meant by abstract utopianism is often highly detailed. The key of concrete utopian thinking is that its details are arrived at through a process of close scrutiny of the existing reality. It is not sufficient to be more specific, that is, to construct new categories, classes and concepts but to argue through them, establish why they are plausible, realistic and possible.

In this vein one not only needs to square dreams with reality by empirically comparing the two, but by making use of reason. While Pisarev might not have referred to reason and rationality, Bloch does. I suggest that the process to which Pisarev refers to as connection between dreams and life, Bloch advances further under the name of *docta spes*, which is a Latin phrase for educated, rationally informed hope.³⁸⁵ My point here is that this education of hope in turn stands for what I above called the process of concretisation, the transformation of abstract into concrete. It is the fusion of the rational and the emotional, more specifically of the hopeful content of our emotions which for Bloch defines the idea of *docta spes*:

³⁸² Bloch, 'Kann Hoffnung enttäuscht werden?', *Literarische Aufsätze*, p. 386.

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 11.

³⁸⁵ 'Doctus' is the Latin for 'having been taught, instructed', and 'spes' for 'hope.'

der *Akt-Inhalt* der Hoffnung ist als bewußt erhellter, gewußt erläuteter die *positive utopische Funktion*; der *Geschichts-Inhalt* der Hoffnung, in Vorstellungen zuerst repräsentiert, in Realurteilen enzyklopädisch erforscht, ist die *menschliche Kultur bezogen auf ihren konkret-utopischen Horizont*. An dieser Erkenntnis arbeitet, als Erwartungsaffekt in der Ratio, als Ratio im Erwartungsaffekt, das Kombinat *Docta spes*. Und in ihm überwiegt nicht mehr die Betrachtung, die seit alters nur auf Gewordenes bezogene, sondern die mitbeteiligte, mitarbeitende Prozeß-Haltung, der deshalb, seit Marx, das offene Werden methodisch nicht mehr verschlossen ist und das Novum nicht mehr materialfremd.³⁸⁶

Here Bloch contends that the vision of utopia constituted through this process of the education of hope is no longer alien in material and sealed methodically. By this I understand that this vision, while holding fast to something that seems essential to hope, the optimist attitude perhaps, or as Bloch calls it elsewhere, 'the upright gait' ('aufrechter Gang'), at the same time converts it into an actually possible future. The key here is that the possible nature of this future results not simply from our hope, but is in turn backed by rational, objective reasons.

Conceiving how concrete utopian thinking would actually look is incredibly difficult, in part also because Bloch's concept of concrete utopia is, as is his philosophy in general, open, thus allowing for many different possible conceptions. This inherent openness could be a reason why Bloch scholarship has not properly pursued this idea so far. Within the Bloch scholarship the only example I have identified of what concrete utopian thinking might correspond to in more practical or pragmatic terms has been given by Rainer E. Zimmerman. Zimmerman defines concrete utopian thinking as 'creating scenarios according to theoretical principles and drawing conclusions about their feasibility in practice'.³⁸⁷ However the openness of Bloch's thought is of course not indefinite, which instigates us to further pursue the concretisation of Bloch's concrete utopia. Above I have already suggested 'particularity' and 'specificity' as defining features of concrete utopian thinking.

³⁸⁶ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 166.

³⁸⁷ Rainer E. Zimmerman, 'Transforming Utopian into Metopian Systems: Bloch's Principle of Hope Revisited', in *Privatization of Hope*, ed. by Thompson and Žižek, pp. 246-68 (p. 256).

Below I suggest further that expressions of concrete utopias are, at least to some degree, positive, that is, that the content of a utopia is formulated positively, in terms of what utopia is and what it looks like.

This might indeed appear to be a far-fetched claim. Bloch was by no means an uncritical advocator of conceptual representations of utopias, which for most of the history, were in fact formulated positively. His intervention into the discussion of the value and function of utopian thinking was original: he did not simply claim that all conceptual utopias produced so far have been misread on the whole and supplied a different reading and valuation of them. His intervention was creative in the sense that he developed a hierarchy of different forms of utopian thinking, or at least provided some material for such a hierarchy. This observation is a well regarded one in the field of Bloch scholarship. What, however, I find has been missed in the discussion of Bloch's re-evaluation of utopian thinking is his view of positive thinking. That this aspect of Bloch has been neglected is not surprising, given that he never neither directly criticises nor advocates the positivity of utopian thinking per se.³⁸⁸ But once we look at the examples of utopian thinking Bloch supplies, it is indisputable that positive thinking is somehow fundamental to them. For example, towards the end of *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* Bloch considers the desirable form of a working day. In principle he identifies there are two possible forms to it: 'that of action' (*vita activa*) and 'that of contemplative stillness' (*vita contemplativa*).³⁸⁹ Bloch further observes that the most desirable form is likely to consist in some combination of the two: one where 'the two forms may alternate directly with one another' (as in the sequence workday-Sunday), or where 'they may permeate one another' (which will only be possible after the abolition of forced labour).³⁹⁰ Bloch also notes that even if the utopian workday entails both of these activities, he is interested in the question 'which wishful image predominates, even in the possible

³⁸⁸ The only explicit reference to the positivity of Bloch's utopian thinking I have been able to identify is the following contention by Thompson: 'What appear to be negative manifestations of the void in traditional Kabbalistic thought thus become in Bloch, through this negation of the negation, positive indications of the latent possibilities in the content of the Real.' (Thompson, 'Religion, Utopia and the Metaphysics of Contingency', in *Privatization of Hope*, ed. by Thompson and Žižek, p. 85.)

³⁸⁹ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 1119.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

permeation, which more evidently contains that which is man's'.³⁹¹ Bloch finds that the question of 'action or contemplation, primacy of the will or of the intellect', was first posited in the Bible, framed as, what he calls, 'the Martha-Mary problem'. Martha was supposed to symbolise active life, whereas Mary the intellectual one. To address this problem Bloch first considers the relevant biblical interpretations offered by thinkers including Thomas Aquinas, Dante, Meister Eckhart, who valued intellect more highly. Later on Bloch explores how these ideas were reversed in protestant ethics and capitalist logic.³⁹² Although Bloch recognises that different religious movements and intellectual traditions tended to prioritise one side of the intellect-contemplation pair, he emphasises this establishment of hierarchy always remained open to doubt and ambivalence. This ambivalence culminated in Marxism, specifically in its idea of 'the revolutionary praxis', which is defined essentially by the fact that it contains both the elements of contemplation and action.³⁹³ Bloch concludes this section on the form and content of the utopian working day by suggesting that the contemplation-action dualism is not only complicated or ambivalent, but that it is 'ultimately groundless'.³⁹⁴ Bloch also offers his own suggestion on how this dualism could be resolved:

Der gute Teil ist letztthin weder von Martha noch von Maria erwählt, sondern ist jenes Echte, das der Aktivität ihr Ruhezentrum aufweist, von dem her und zu dem hin sie geschieht. So wurden in der griechischen Sage die Täter Achilles, Askulap, Herakles, Jason wenigstens dem Kentauren Chiron zur Erziehung gegeben, als der Allegorie von Weisheit und Aktion in einem.³⁹⁵

My contention has been that, while Bloch directly investigates the concept of concrete utopia from which an idea of concrete utopian thinking can be derived, he does not himself engage in the practice of concrete utopian thinking. The above example of Bloch's deliberations on the ideal working day thus serves to illustrate not concrete utopian thinking per se but more generally the positivity of Bloch's notion of utopian thinking as the Not-Yet. Bloch talks about the 'the good part' of life

³⁹¹ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 1119.

³⁹² Ibid., p. 1120.

³⁹³ Ibid., p. 1123.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 1124.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

in its own terms, and not in terms of its wrong part.³⁹⁶ He elaborates on the historical understandings of this good part, in terms of what this good part *is*, or in what it consists of, and not in terms of what it *is not*, or what it does not consist in. And although his own concluding proposal on the content of an ideal working day is highly dialectical in the way it formulates the relationship between the stillness and activity, rest and movement, it does state what this content *is*.

To establish more firmly the overlap between Bloch's overall notion of utopian thinking grounded in the Not-Yetness of his utopia and positive thinking would require further work. I have, however, provided enough evidence to establish that this overlap is a plausible one. Unlike Adorno's portrayals of a utopian society which source their material from the ills and the wrongs of the existing society, Bloch's images are derived from the already existing conceptions of the good and the right. Given that concrete utopian thinking presents one form of Bloch's overall notion of utopian thinking, I therefore argue that it too must formulate utopia at least partially positively. Concrete utopian thinking cannot be reduced to negation or negative thinking.

This claim brings this chapter to its end. In this chapter I have shown that Bloch calls for an integration of utopian thinking into Critical Theory, or, to put it in his own terms, for an intensification of the warm stream of Marxism. That Bloch's demand indeed amounts to a rejection of Adorno's *Utopieverbot* I have made evident by exploring what Bloch means by this warm stream of Marxism, and I have suggested that concrete utopian thinking is one of its possible varieties. Through the consideration of Bloch's concept of *Heimat* and the invariant of direction I have emphasised that Bloch's overturning of the *Utopieverbot* does not imply a complete reversal of Adorno's position, that is, Bloch advocacy of utopian thinking is not uncritical or dogmatic. It is, however, grounded on the contrasting view regarding the possibility of utopian thinking, and moreover, it does imply that utopian thinking in the sense I use in this thesis, namely as a form of positive thinking, is a necessary element of Critical Theory. In the next chapter I provide justification of Bloch's view;

³⁹⁶ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 1124.

that is, the reasons why, according to Bloch, utopian thinking is possible and necessary. By considering these reasons I open the ontological basis of his philosophy, which in turn offers some material to further concretise my thoughts on how utopian thinking as a critical-theoretical practice would actually look. Above, I have attempted to do so in terms of substantiating the concept of concrete utopian thinking; at the end of the next chapter I do so by considering what we might understand by what I call 'processual utopian thinking'.

CHAPTER 5

An ontology of processual utopia

In contrast to Adorno, Bloch believes that we are able to envisage utopia: we have been able to do so historically, and we are able to do so now, under the conditions of late capitalism. This does not mean that we can foresee or know exactly the utopian society that might one day arise in the future. Bloch refers to this society with the term *Heimat*; Adorno, meanwhile, terms it 'the Other' ('das Andere'). It has many other possible names. For example, the contemporary French philosopher Quentin Meillassoux, who, like Bloch, belongs to the tradition of speculative materialism, usefully calls it by the name of 'the Fourth World'.³⁹⁷ As explained in my previous chapter, in Bloch's view, *Heimat* cannot be known and thus articulated comprehensively and systematically, but can only be vaguely intimated. Bloch, however, holds that *concrete utopias* can be conceptualised. One way to paraphrase this view is to say that while we cannot know the actual utopian society of the future, we can *anticipate* it: our conceptualisations of the utopian society do not correspond to its actual manifestation in the future, but instead present its possibilities or potentials. This idea of utopian visions as potentialities of the ultimate, actual utopia is closely related to Bloch's conception of utopia as the Not-Yet being. For Bloch, *Heimat*, the fully completed utopia, just as any other being, has historical prefigurations, beings which entail the actual content of *Heimat*, even if in an undeveloped or incomplete version. The operator of the Not-Yet in Bloch substitutes that of the identity which seems implicit in both Marx and Adorno, and which, at least in part, led them to reject the possibility of utopian thinking. Unlike Marx and Adorno, Bloch is not making a claim to an identification between our visions of utopia and utopia itself. Why Marx and Adorno deemed utopian conceptualisations impossible was dependent also on the fact that the object of these conceptualisations was limited to the actual utopian society of the future. For Bloch, in contrast, utopian thinking is an attempt to envisage the potentials of this

³⁹⁷ This phrase appears in Meillassoux's unpublished manuscript *L'Inexistence Divine*. Cf. Graham Harman, *Quentin Meillassoux: philosophy in the making* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 99-100.

utopian society, to articulate outlines that may nonetheless only approach, resemble or approximate it. This difference in what the exact object of utopian thinking is partly explains the contrast between Adorno's and Bloch's views regarding the question of the possibility of utopian thinking. What, however, remains unexplained so far is why Bloch believes that conceptualisations of these potentialities of the utopian society are possible. How does Bloch justify the idea that what we currently take the utopian society to be does, in fact, somehow resemble it? Why does Bloch not see, as Adorno did, all conceptual articulations of the utopian world to be merely rearticulations of the present one?

The answer to this question is not simple, and depends on the perspective of Bloch's philosophy from which we attempt to formulate it. The first two sections of this chapter provide two answers based on Bloch's conceptions of human mind and matter. An exploration of these ontological aspects of Bloch's philosophy will in turn enable us to consider the question of the necessity of utopian thinking, that is, why, in Bloch's view, utopian thinking presents a necessary ingredient of Critical Theory. In the penultimate section I return to the question of the possibility of utopian thinking, and approach it negatively — why is it that the actual utopian society *cannot* be known? The key lies in Bloch's philosophy of history, my investigation of which will pave the way to further advancing the idea of concrete utopian thinking into a practice I call 'processual utopian thinking'.

The prefigurations of utopia in the 'Not-Yet-Conscious'

In the radio conversation with Bloch, Adorno mentions the phrase 'utopian consciousness'. I have suggested that this phrase points to Adorno's belief that, in principle, human beings are able to engender visions of utopia. I have further elaborated on how this consciousness, in Adorno's own view, is coopted by the oppressive and controlling mechanisms of the capitalist ideology which in turn hinder its functioning. I have also explained that although this idea of utopian consciousness is detectable in Adorno, it is left underdeveloped. The situation is very different with Bloch. Bloch has a highly developed conception of utopian consciousness for which he uses the term 'the Not-Yet-Conscious' ('das Noch-Nicht-

Bewußte'). The most significant difference between Adorno's utopian consciousness and Bloch's Not-Yet-Conscious is, however, not in how far these concepts are advanced philosophically. Instead, this difference regards their nature as such: Bloch's Not-Yet-Conscious is an *essential* part of the human psyche. Although its content does depend on existing historical conditions, it will always retain some independence from these conditions and produce what is truly its own utopian content. Bloch sees this Not-Yet-Conscious as 'the mental representation of what is coming up', 'the actual space of receptivity of the New and production of the New' and as 'the preconsciousness of that which is coming up, the birthplace of the New'.³⁹⁸ Wishing, desiring, hoping, and imagining are the cognitive processes that occur within this part of the human psyche, and the contents of these processes, that is, our wishes, desires and hopes, are prefigurations or adumbrations of the utopian society.

Bloch contends that the Not-Yet-Conscious has so far remained 'disregarded' and 'unnoticed'.³⁹⁹ This disregard has, in Bloch's view, resulted in a multilayered misunderstanding of the meaning, nature and functions of the human mind. He posits that, for a long time in the intellectual history of the human mind, it was believed that human beings are generally aware of their inner mental life. A breakthrough was achieved when it was discovered that this is not the case, that 'mental life does not coincide with consciousness'.⁴⁰⁰ This breakthrough in turn led to the discovery of the unconscious, that is, those mental activities which we are not aware of. And in this identification Bloch determined a mistake: namely that the unconscious was understood to be completely subordinated to the conscious. In his own words, the unconscious is recognised as something that 'lies beneath consciousness and has dropped out of it'.⁴⁰¹ Instead, Bloch suggests, the correct understanding of the unconscious is as having two sides to it: one that is subordinated to the conscious — Bloch calls this side 'the No-Longer-Conscious'

³⁹⁸ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, pp. 157; 131.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 150; 131.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*

(‘Nicht-Mehr-Bewußte’) — and the other side that is supraordinated to the conscious.⁴⁰² The Not-Yet-Conscious is this second side of the unconscious.

The way Bloch talks about this disregard and misinterpretation of the human psyche is exemplary of his understanding of the advancement of our knowledge more generally. He certainly considers this advancement to be progressive, but in a very peculiar way. His notion of progress entails a temporal structure of a continuously delayed development. As the advancement of a certain idea progresses, it never arrives as a fully formed insight, but always lacks something of that which it strives for. At first, all our inner life was conceived of as conscious, then also as unconscious, and now with Bloch this unconscious is further differentiated into the No-Longer-Conscious and the Not-Yet-Conscious. Each of these categories, however, anticipates the forthcoming ones: that of consciousness anticipates that of unconsciousness, and that of unconsciousness those of the No-Longer-Conscious and the Not-Yet-Conscious. As Wayne Hudson notes, this temporal structure even applies to Bloch’s own thought and writing.⁴⁰³ Bloch, in fact, never fully answers the questions at the point when he poses them.

It is thus more accurate to claim not that Bloch argues that the existence of the Not-Yet-Conscious has been disregarded, that is, left out entirely from the previous understandings of human minds; but rather that it has been misunderstood. In the following I explain what exactly this misunderstanding of the Not-Yet-Conscious amounts to. I suggest that there are two aspects to this misunderstanding: first, in viewing the Not-Yet-Conscious as a purely subjective sphere, and second, in seeing it as being interconnected only with the past. Further on, I show that Bloch objects to these two ideas, and in turn perceives the Not-Yet-Conscious not only as a subjective but also as an objective phenomenon, and as one interconnected not only with the past but also with the future.

Bloch argues that the Not-Yet-Conscious has been interpreted as a purely subjective phenomenon, as originating, advancing and terminating in the subject. The

⁴⁰² Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 130.

⁴⁰³ Hudson, ‘Bloch and a Philosophy of the Proterior’, in *Privatization of Hope*, ed. by Thompson and Žižek, pp. 21-37 (p. 23).

misinterpretation Bloch highlights is the mere subjective relevance of the cognitive material produced by this Not-Yet-Conscious, the idea that our wishes and dreams pertain only to ourselves and have no wider significance, neither for individuals around us, nor for humanity as such, nor indeed, for the world at large. One intellectual source of this misinterpretation identified by Bloch is Freud's theory of dreams.⁴⁰⁴

According to Bloch, Freud sees the main function of dreaming to be the provision of a space in which the subject expresses and provisionally gratifies essentially unrealistic wishes or fantasies. Here, this provisional gratification is perceived as an aspect of expression: by dreaming that I live by the ocean, my dreams not only reveal to me that living by the ocean is my wish, but also fulfil this wish — since in my dreams I am living by the ocean and am, thereby, 'realising' my wish.⁴⁰⁵ There is, of course, a difference between realising this wish in my life materially and realising it through dreaming. Bloch thus talks about this gratification as 'hallucinated wish-fulfillments'.⁴⁰⁶ In order for these wishes to be fulfilled, even in this twisted, immaterial way, the space in which dreaming takes place — namely the unconscious — must be completely removed from reality. Only then can our minds feel secure enough to express these wishes, which are deemed to be incompatible with reality.

Although Bloch does not object to Freud's reading of nocturnal dreaming, he criticises him for not adequately distinguishing nocturnal dreaming from daytime

⁴⁰⁴ Besides his motives of the drive and the unconscious, Freud's theory of dreams is the key idea that Bloch critically adopted from Freud. For an account of the influence of Freud on the genesis of Bloch's philosophy, see Hans-Ernst Schiller, *Freud-Kritik von Links; Bloch, Fromm, Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse* (Springe: Klampen Verlag, 2017), pp. 27-86.

⁴⁰⁵ Freud, however, considered that, most often, dreams do not represent our wishes as openly as in this example. According to Freud, dreams are a disguise of wishes, and their manifest content does not directly reveal (?) these wishes. Suppose I have murderous feelings towards my boss because he or she frustrates me. I probably would not act out the wish of killing them in my dream, but I might dream of something else that disguises or displaces that wish. I might dream that I kill myself, or die, and that everyone grieves over me. In order to understand what the underlying wish of this dream is, what this dream is actually trying to accomplish, the dream needs to be analysed. In particular, what would need to be subjected to analysis are what Freud called 'the dream-work', namely, the processes by which the wish disguised itself in a dream. See, Sigmund Freud, 'The Interpretation of Dreams', in *The Freud Reader*, ed. by Peter Gay (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989), pp. 129-41.

⁴⁰⁶ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 87.

dreaming, for seeing the latter as a subcategory of the former.⁴⁰⁷ Bloch argues instead that daytime dreams are not merely a 'stepping stone' to the nocturnal ones, and that they should be examined and analysed separately.⁴⁰⁸ The initial distinction Bloch identifies between nocturnal and daytime dreams is between the backward or past remembering of nocturnal dreams, and the forward or future anticipation of daydreams. Whereas 'night-dreams mostly cannibalise the former life of the drives, they feed on past if not archaic image-material, and nothing new happens under their bare moon', daydreams are 'forerunners and anticipation'.⁴⁰⁹ I return to this distinction below. The other distinction Bloch indicates relates to the creative or productive potential of daydreams:

Anders als der nächtliche Traum zeichnet der des Tages frei wählbare und wiederholbare Gestalten in die Luft, er kann schwärmen und faseln, aber auch sinnen und planen. Er hängt auf müßige Weise... Gedanken nach, politischen, künstlerischen, wissenschaftlichen. Der Tagtraum kann Einfälle liefern, die nicht nach Deutung, sondern nach Verarbeitung verlangen, er baut Luftschlösser auch als Planbilder und nicht immer nur fiktive.⁴¹⁰

Here, Bloch notes that the material engendered by our daydreaming is not merely fictitious or unrealistic. Precisely because daydreaming does not occur in the realm of the unconscious but in the conscious one, a link with external reality is maintained. Because during daydreaming 'the relationship to the outside world is in no way screened out', as it is in the night-dream, Bloch continues, this type of dreaming produces wishes which are relevant for reality, are realistic, able to be fulfilled in the future — they are objective.⁴¹¹ Or, in Bloch's own words: 'what is essential to the daydream' is the seriousness of the pre-appearance of the possibly Real ('Vor-Schein von möglich Wirklichem').⁴¹² This category of 'the possibly Real' is

⁴⁰⁷ Bloch seems to exaggerate the degree to which Freud neglects the category of daydreaming. Freud does in some of his writings clearly distinguish daydreams from the night ones. See, e.g., his lecture from 1908, 'Creative Writing and Day-Dreaming', in *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay, pp. 436-42.

⁴⁰⁸ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 96.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Ibid., p. 102.

⁴¹² Ibid., p. 109.

one of Bloch's phrases for the objective or realistic ideas we have about the future. The reason why the products of daydreams indicate objective possibilities lies for Bloch not only in the fact that they maintain this relationship with external reality in the course of their production, but also in that they are extroverted, that is, oriented towards external reality, the reality outside the subject itself. That is, while nocturnal dreams are oriented towards themselves, in that they can find their fulfillment in themselves, this is different for daytime dreams. Bloch writes that the fulfillment of daydreams proceeds via their effects on our actions, which then in turn affect the external reality: 'more than one daydream before now has, with sufficient vigour and experience, *remodelled* reality to make it give this consent'.⁴¹³ Whereas the night dream is supposedly idle, the day dream contains a self-innervation, a tireless incentive towards the actual attainment of what it visualises.⁴¹⁴ That is, the daydream is not fulfilled through its mere articulation, but through its actual fulfillment, that is, once reality is modified in accordance with the content of these dreams.

The other way in which Bloch sees the Not-Yet-Conscious to have been misunderstood, besides in this objective-subjective relation, is that it has been seen as being tied only to the past. By being tied to the past, Bloch means that the Not-Yet-Conscious is comprehended simply as a manifestation of what has already happened, of what has always been. In other words, Bloch contends that others have perceived the Not-Yet-Conscious to function as some sort of a collection device or repository of experiences already undergone and completed events, as a passive storage device for these events and experiences.

Bloch traces these ideas back to the early nineteenth century, in the intellectual-artistic movement of Romanticism. The Romantics — Bloch singles out Byron, Shelley and Pushkin, as well as the pre-Romantics of *Sturm und Drang* — were, however, for Bloch, still ambivalent with regard to the relation of their ideas to time. For Bloch, it often appears as if these artists and writers were simultaneously glorifying both the past and the future, looking both backwards and forwards, seeing the golden age they were describing as an age that has already passed, and as one

⁴¹³ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 98.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

that is yet to arise. It was only the theory of psychoanalysis, which started emerging by the turn of the twentieth century, that supposedly cemented the content of the Not-Yet-Conscious as content purely of the past. Yet Bloch does find in the writings of German Romantics, such as Joseph Görres, some real precursors to Freud's and especially to Carl Jung's psychoanalytic work. Bloch asserts that, for all the ambiguities and complexities of Romanticism, its progressive character and revolutionary strands, it was primarily rooted in and to the past: 'in a way which can hardly be recaptured any more, the Romantic was enslaved by the past' and 'preferred to raise nothing but knights' castles in the magic moonlit night'.⁴¹⁵

In Romantic literature and music, Bloch identifies images of the good and the new, such as for example the knights' castles ('Ritterburgen'). Bloch does not condemn these images themselves. In fact, he sees them as constitutive of genuinely utopian material, providing visions of something that is better. That is, Romanticism possesses its own ideas of what a better world could be. The issue Bloch sees is that 'the Romantic does not understand utopia, not even his own'.⁴¹⁶ More precisely, Bloch argues that the Romantics misperceived the location of utopias they were envisaging. In Romanticism, utopia is viewed as belonging to the past, as a world that did exist but that has passed and is now gone. Bloch makes this point clearly by differentiating between the acts of production and of reflection, the former corresponding to the creation of an artwork, and the latter to the interpretation of the artwork once it has been conceived. He illustrates this difference by commenting on the German Romantic novelist Jean Paul: 'even Jean Paul, the creator of the most beautiful wishful landscapes shimmering ahead, finally sought the light, as soon as he was not creating but rather reflecting on it, only in the past, not in the future'.⁴¹⁷ Bloch considers Jean Paul the creator of 'the most beautiful wishful landscapes', and does not dispute the aesthetics or desirability of the content of his writings. Instead, Bloch criticises Jean Paul's own view of what writing about and describing these landscapes entailed. According to Bloch, for Jean Paul writing entailed *representing* the past, as opposed to *creating* or *producing* the future. Bloch sees the landscapes Jean Paul described as objects of thought, as ideas created by the author, ideas that

⁴¹⁵ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 152

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

do not possess a corresponding material counterpart: these landscapes existed for the time being only in Jean Paul's mind and on the paper. One could say that, for Bloch, the Romantics were too modest with respect to their own artistic or creative potential: where they were in fact producing something new, they thought they were only reproducing the old. They wrongly perceived themselves as epigones, as merely following or imitating past practitioners. This is what Bloch means when he writes that: 'All productivity, especially the expectation which paradoxically characterizes so much of Romanticism, lost itself here in antiquarian images, in the past, in the immemorial, in myth'.⁴¹⁸ The new ideas the Romantics created were deprived of their own newness because they were deemed as having been sourced from the past. In that their productivity of the Not-Yet-Conscious part of the human mind was not actually comprehended as productivity, but instead as reproduction, or as epigonism, something valuable was lost.⁴¹⁹

Bloch argues that the correct interpretation of the Not-Yet-Conscious is to view it as being tied not only to the past but also to the future, and thus to recognise its productive, creative and dynamic capacities. For Bloch the Not-Yet-Conscious does not merely collect events and experiences that have already happened but engenders events that could happen in the future.

One reason why Bloch sees the content of the Not-Yet-Conscious as something that could yet happen, as anticipating the future, is because he does not regard the past and its events as completed, as having occurred fully or entirely, as being realised to their full possibility. This idea is entailed in one of the better known of Bloch's dictums — that the 'S is not yet P'.⁴²⁰ One way to interpret this claim is to say that 'P' represents the entirety, or the full extent of possibilities of an event or an object; and 'S' the event or the object as it actually existed, that is, those possibilities of P that were in fact already realised. The valuable function of the Not-Yet-Conscious lies for Bloch precisely in the fact that it does not store these events merely as 'S' but that it can capture them also as 'P'. In the act of capturing 'P' resides the productiveness or the creativeness of the Not-Yet-Conscious — it does not *articulate* events as they

⁴¹⁸ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 153.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., p. 141.

⁴²⁰ Bloch, *Experimentum Mundi; Frage, Kategorien des Herausbringens, Praxis*, GA, Vol. 15, p. 42.

were but *rearticulates* them as they could have been. Bloch perceives the gap between what they were and what they could have been as their unrealised possibilities or as their future content. One could say that the Not-Yet-Conscious somehow *misremembers* past events by endowing them with something more that they actually were.

Incompleteness of the world as the 'Not-Yet-Become'

Via this revision of Freud's interpretation of dreams, we can now see more specifically how Bloch modified Marx's dismissal of our wishes and desires as a valuable tool of achieving social transformation. Unlike Bloch, Marx did not discuss the value of dreams and dreaming. He did, however, touch on a related cognitive capacity he referred to as imagination or fantasy, as outlined in my first chapter. For Marx, fantasising was synonymous with producing ideas of a good society that cannot possibly be realised, and the reason he offered to support this contention was that fantasising is not influenced at all by external, objective reality — it takes place within the subject itself, removed from non-subjective conditions. As I elaborated further in that chapter, this view of Marx is paradoxical: whereas in his general materialist orientation he considers the whole of reality, including the subjects and their consciousness, to be conditioned by matter, his comments on fantasising have a heavily idealistic overtone. While still residing in consciousness, fantasising is supposed to be wholly autonomous, and not at all affected by the objective conditions, as if the engendered ideas were to emerge from themselves.

Bloch's own variety of materialist philosophy is free of this paradox.⁴²¹ Although Marx does not frame the relation between the objective and the subjective, or between matter and consciousness, in a strictly deterministic fashion, he does not recognise these categories in a fully dialectical sense. For Marx, there is always some separation maintained between the object and the subject. Whereas consciousness

⁴²¹ Different names were used by Bloch himself and later by his scholars to designate his kind of materialism including 'speculative materialism' and 'ontology of the Not-Yet,' and 'philosophy of the unfinished world'. For Bloch's use of the term 'speculative materialism' see Cat Moir, 'Beyond the Turn: Ernst Bloch and the Future of Speculative Materialism', *Poetics Today*, 37:2 (2016), 327-51 (pp. 329-30).

is heavily conditioned by material reality, and in turn, also influences the latter realm, it nevertheless exists, in Marx's system, as something separate from matter. This is very different for Bloch. For Bloch, as Hans Heinz Holz puts it, all 'layers of the living, the spiritual and the psychological' are grasped 'as manifestations of material nature', and moreover, the consciousness itself is 'a kind of material being'.⁴²² This means that mind and consciousness are themselves part of material reality, are partially objective themselves. Thus, for Bloch, any product of consciousness, including wishes, dreams and imaginary ideas, is not a purely subjective but also an objective phenomenon. Bloch's term 'objective imagination' ('objektive Phantasie') is a perfect example of the operation of his dialectical analysis of the relationship between the subject and the object, or consciousness and matter. In this relationship, fantasy, hope, dreams and possibility are predicated on what is objectively possible. But at the same time, what is objectively possible is changed by the way in which dreams, hopes, and fantasy are expressed and mobilised.

A helpful term to conceive of Bloch's consciousness-matter relation is in terms of *articulation* or *manifestation*: ideas, wishes, hopes and dreams are one possible manifestation of the material reality. This relation, however, does not apply only to ideas, etc. but to consciousness as such. In Bloch's ontology, each individual dimension of consciousness should itself be understood as a manifestation of a certain dimension of matter, including the Not-Yet-Conscious. Its corresponding material dimension is 'the Not-Yet-Become' ('das Noch-Nicht-Gewordenes'). Bloch defines this category as the correlate of the Not-Yet-Conscious.⁴²³ The importance of the Not-Yet-Conscious lies in how it gives us access to the Not-Yet-Become, which is not, on its own, directly comprehensible or accessible to human beings. However, what Bloch actually means by his idea of the Not-Yet-Become is far from obvious. The concept implies that something that is material — in the sense of being tangible, physical, and as such already existent — at the same time, in virtue of its belonging to the Not-Yet, also does not exist. But how can this ontological non-existence hold for matter itself? Is not matter defined by its ontological existence or presence? If

⁴²² Hans Heinz Holz, 'Spekulativer Materialismus', in *Bloch-Wörterbuch*, ed. by Dietschy et al., pp. 483-508 (p. 485).

⁴²³ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 160.

matter is that which really exists out there, does it simply have to exist and be present?

The answer lies in Bloch's distinct view of what matter is. In his *Tübinger Einleitung in die Philosophie*, he formulates this view in the following words: 'the world-substance, mundane matter itself, is not yet finished and complete, but persists in a utopian-open state, i.e. a state in which its self-identity is not yet manifest'.⁴²⁴ Bloch's materialism is more complex than the basic contention that matter is the only thing there is, that there is nothing that is not material. With this contention Bloch combines a view of matter as a process, as an essentially dynamic entity, which he calls 'creative matter' or *natura naturans*.⁴²⁵ Bloch objects to the conception of matter as 'Klotz,' as a lump of dead and inert stuff.⁴²⁶ He refashions this view of matter by adopting ideas which he refers to as Left-Aristotelian ideas. More specifically, Bloch's category of the Not-Yet-Become can be understood as a certain reconceptualisation of the Aristotelian categories of the *dynámei on* (that which might become possible) and *kata to dynaton* (that which is possible). Whereas these Aristotelian categories themselves are difficult to grasp, and furthermore it remains unclear how exactly Bloch converts them into his Not-Yet-Become, the key idea to understand here is that the actual and potential forms of the existence of matter are both seen as essential to matter. That a form which has not yet actualised is in fact present in matter is thus no oxymoron: it is simply a different initial presumption about what matter is from what we see to be the common sense one.

The necessity of utopian thinking

Bloch's Not-Yet-Conscious is not a repository of past objects or events as they happen, but instead a method that produces or creates possibilities not yet attained in reality. Prima facie, Bloch's criticism of Freud can be read simply as Freud's

⁴²⁴ Bloch, *Tübinger Einleitung in die Philosophie*, GA, Vol. 13, p. 102.

⁴²⁵ Vincent Geoghegan, 'An Anti-humanist Utopia?', in *Privatization of Hope*, ed. by Thompson and Žižek, pp. 37-60 (p. 45).

⁴²⁶ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 1371.

failure to recognise a side of the human psyche, or as a misinterpretation of the psyche. As Thompson puts it, Bloch's objection to:

the Freudian *Urtrauma* and psychologization of the political and philosophical debate was that the Socratic idea that all thought is simply anamnesis, that is, constant remembering and repetition of past events, does not take into account the fact that most people actually spend most of their time projecting forward.⁴²⁷

That is, Bloch is claiming that for a large part, human thought has to do with the future, of what we will do, could do, with projecting, planning, anticipating, living in the future, and that Freud failed to notice this. He disputes the mere existence of anamnestic repetition as a defining anthropological feature.

This, however, is only the most basic layer of Bloch's objection to Freud. It is rather an explicit one, and in principal it amounts to an empirical objection. Beyond this, I find there is another, less straightforward critique, yet a more significant one. It is evident that for Bloch this misinterpretation is deeply problematic, that the subordination of the Not-Yet-Conscious to a past world has detrimental implications. What is not so evident is why this misinterpretation is problematic, why it is detrimental to conceive of the Not-Yet-Conscious as merely an archive of the past and not also of the possibilities of the future. What is the point, in Thompson's words, of Bloch's 'accusation of anamnestic circularity'?⁴²⁸ Why is it important, as Žižek puts it, 'not to adopt toward the present the "point of view of finality," viewing it as if it were already past', but instead 'to reintroduce the openness of future into the past, to grasp that-what-was in its process of becoming, to see the contingent process that generated existing necessity'?⁴²⁹ The closest that Bloch comes to an answer is in the following assertion: 'the vision of the utopian conditions, the yield of its content, thus encountered the most powerful block [...] in

⁴²⁷ Thompson, 'Religion, Utopia and the Metaphysics of Contingency', in *Privatization of Hope*, ed. by Thompson and Žižek, pp. 86-7.

⁴²⁸ Thompson, 'What Is Concrete about Ernst Bloch's Concrete Utopia?', in *Utopia: social theory and the future*, ed. by Jacobsen and Tester, p. 42.

⁴²⁹ Slavoj Žižek, 'Preface', in *Privatization of Hope*, ed. by Thompson and Žižek, p. xviii.

anamnesis, a re-remembering'.⁴³⁰ By the 'yield' of a utopian vision, Bloch refers to an actually existing utopian society. What anamnesis obstructs is the realisation of a utopian society, its actualisation. In another instance in *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* Bloch makes a basically identical remark — he describes anamnesis as a 'block against the being *sui generis*', that is, as the obstruction *sui generis*, obstruction as such, that which is the block itself in being.⁴³¹ What Freud lacks in Bloch's view is thus not simply the mere faculty of forward looking but the transformative or productive power that this faculty has in relation to our reality. That anticipation plays a constructive role in facilitating progressive social transformation is a contention many scholars ascribe to Bloch. Among others, Ruth Levitas posits that, in Bloch's view, utopian thinking plays the function of a 'catalyst of a better future', that it not only anticipates this future but 'helps to effect' this future.⁴³² Similarly, Douglas Keller asserts that 'it is his [Bloch's] conviction that only when we project our future in the light of what is, what has been, and what could be can we engage in the creative practice that will produce the world we all want and realize humanity's deepest hopes and dreams', and moreover points to the 'unrealised potentialities' as that which 'propel us to change and self-realization'.⁴³³ Yet, another question remains to be answered, namely: what is this productive function of our anticipation, how does it work, and why, on the other hand, does re-remembering not possess it? As I have argued above, the object of dispute is the interpretation or recognition of a specific wish or desire, and not the content of this desire or wish itself. The same wish can be comprehended either as a forgone moment in the past, or as one that might yet come. Why and how does this twist matter? Why is the former 'enshrined feeling, this incestuous phenomenon of the desire to return to the womb of the night and the past', a block to the realisation of a utopian society, and the latter conducive to it?⁴³⁴

Bloch does not explain why utopian thinking plays a productive role in the realisation of the future. It is not even the case that he intends to, but then fails, to

⁴³⁰ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 154.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

⁴³² Levitas, 'Educated Hope: Ernst Bloch on Abstract and Concrete Utopia', p. 14.

⁴³³ Douglas Kellner and Harry O'Hara, 'Utopia and Marxism in Ernst Bloch', *New German Critique*, 9 (1976), 11-34 (p. 26).

⁴³⁴ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 153.

give any kind of answer. He does not posit this question since the very claim that utopian thinking creates the future is the very starting point of his philosophy. To be more precise, Bloch does not make this claim with respect to utopian thinking itself, but to a closely related, more general act of hoping. Evidently, or perhaps not so evidently, this claim is enclosed in the phrase 'Prinzip Hoffnung', which suggests above all that hope is a 'principle'. Here Bloch uses the concept 'principle' as a fundamental element or determinant of reality. Put more simply, Bloch understands hoping as something that *is*, as an activity in which humans engage, an activity that is essentially constitutive of humans, as an anthropological fact.

A starting point of Bloch's philosophy is a specific anthropological view, according to which human beings are controlled strongly by their drives or impulses ('Triebe'). But whereas Freud postulates libido as the most important of these drives, Bloch argues that there exists a more general drive, of which libido is merely one manifestation. In accordance with another starting point of Bloch's philosophy, namely the 'not-yetness', the incompleteness of reality, human beings too are incomplete. As the opening heading of the first chapter in *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* tells us: 'WE START OUT EMPTY'.⁴³⁵ This emptiness or incompleteness of human beings is analogous, for Bloch, to our lack of self-possession, self-awareness or self-recognition. This idea permeates Bloch's writings and is often articulated aphoristically right at their beginnings. For example, in the *Tübinger Einleitung in die Philosophie*, Bloch contends: 'I am. But I do not possess myself'.⁴³⁶ According to Bloch, the most fundamental anthropological drive is thus the drive towards completion, towards exceeding what we already are, but at the same time towards merely recognising what we already are. As he explains in the same text:

Um sich zu sehen und gar was um es ist, muß es aus sich heraus. Muß sich herausmachen, damit es überhaupt erst etwas sehen kann, sich unter seinesgleichen, wodurch ein Ich bin, als nicht mehr an sich, zu einem Wir sind wird.⁴³⁷

⁴³⁵ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 21.

⁴³⁶ Bloch, *Tübinger Einleitung in die Philosophie*, p. 13.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

And furthermore: 'Das bloße Bin muß, damit es seiner auch nur empfindlich werde, sich ein Etwas von draußen anziehen'.⁴³⁸ The critical point to understand here is that for Bloch the acts of recognising and exceeding ourselves are inseparable. Bloch names 'the inside' ('das Innen') that what we already are — 'The "is" is inside' — and 'the outside' ('das Außen') that which we are not yet.⁴³⁹ The anthropological constant of the drive towards exceeding ourselves can thus be reformulated as the drive towards the outside.

One idea of Bloch, however, may provide the grounds from which a more nuanced, worked out answer can be developed. This idea is the distinction Bloch draws between anamnestic and anticipatory thinking. This idea is, of course, one of the essential building blocks of Bloch's philosophy and Bloch is at pains to emphasise just how fundamentally, and in how many different ways, these two sorts of thinking differ. The particular difference that I consider relevant to the above question is the difference between memory as being finished, closed, completed, and anticipation as being unfinished, open, incomplete. Bloch describes memory as 'a finished simultaneity' ('fertiges Zugleichsein'), as the flash where the closedness of what is opening up has long since been decided.⁴⁴⁰

The distinction has the following significant implication: if a certain idea is in fact yet to be realised, if there exists a gap between our conception of it and its actual material existence, then there exists scope for us to influence and to help with this realisation. If ideas are mobilised in the service of the future, only then can they become productive for the realisation of the desirable future, and for the transformation of the undesirable present. On the other hand, if something has already been realised then there is nothing more that can be done, and in this sense memory as such does not provide any incentive for us to act or to change our behaviour.

⁴³⁸ Bloch, *Tübinger Einleitung in die Philosophie*, p. 13.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 158: 'Der Blitz des neuen Anfangs ist auch hier nur Anfang mit längst entschiedener Abgeschlossenheit des Aufgehenden und darum im Kreis geschehend, ohne Hoffnung zu einem noch Ungekommenen.'

Processual utopia and processual utopian thinking

Bloch's position on the possibility of utopian thinking as I have outlined it so far can be summarised as the following: whereas the content of the absolute utopian society, that is, of the one specific better society that might in fact come into being in the future and that would exist materially, cannot be known in the present, the multiplicity of potential utopian societies can in turn be known. Bloch maintains that we are able to plan for the unforeseen and to map out what we think this unknown might possibly hold for us. His conceptions of human consciousness and of matter as containing the Not-Yet serve as justification of this position, in particular of its positive dimension, that we *can* know; or, to use a more appropriate term, that we can *anticipate* the future. These conceptions, however, do not fully account for the other, negative side of Bloch's position, namely, for why we *cannot* know the one actual utopian society. The answer to this question lies in Bloch's idea of history as an open process, instead of as a predetermined path; and correspondingly in his idea of utopia as an outcome of this process, instead of as a telos of the path.

History, for Bloch, is an open process in that each event is an outcome of existing conditions — it is contingent on these contingencies. In this vein, Peter Thompson has termed Bloch's conception of history as being underpinned by the 'metaphysics of contingency'.⁴⁴¹ This emphasis on contingency does not, however, imply that these events are completely arbitrary, as if emerging from nowhere. No: for Bloch, as Thompson holds, each event is determined by everything else that preceded it.⁴⁴² This means that each event is, besides being contingent, also necessary, in the sense of being the unique outcome of all the events that have happened before it.

As any other event, the really existing utopian society of the future should also be understood as the outcome of everything that has happened up until its emergence. This idea of utopia is implied in Bloch's probably most often-quoted fragment, the final passage of *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*:

⁴⁴¹ Peter Thompson, 'Ernst Bloch and the Spirituality of Utopia', *Rethinking Marxism*, 28:3-4 (2016), 438-52; 'What is concrete about Bloch's 'Concrete Utopia' in *Utopia: Social Theory and the Future* ed. by Jacobsen and Tester; 'Religion, Utopia, and the Metaphysics of Contingency', in *Privatization of Hope*, ed. by Thompson and Žižek.

⁴⁴² Thompson, 'Ernst Bloch and the Spirituality of Utopia', p. 443.

Der Mensch lebt noch überall in der Vorgeschichte, ja alles und jedes steht noch vor Erschaffung der Welt, als einer rechten. *Die wirkliche Genesis ist nicht am Anfang, sondern am Ende*, und sie beginnt erst anzufangen, wenn Gesellschaft und Dasein radikal werden, das heißt sich an der Wurzel fassen. Die Wurzel der Geschichte aber ist der arbeitende, schaffende, die Gegebenheiten umbildende und überholende Mensch. Hat er sich erfaßt und das Seine ohne Entäußerung und Entfremdung in realer Demokratie begründet, so entsteht in der Welt etwas, das allen in die Kindheit scheint und worin noch niemand war: Heimat.⁴⁴³

The reputation of this passage does not necessarily facilitate our grasp either of the passage as a whole, or of the paradoxical claim that lies at its heart, namely: 'The true genesis is not at the beginning, but at the end'. Here Bloch rewrites the meaning of genesis, disentangling it from its Biblical meaning. In the biblical context, the term genesis coincides with God's creation of the human world, and thus implies simply a fulfillment of God's creativity. In contrast, in Bloch's sense, genesis is only present at the end and as a result of the process of becoming. But how can something that is by definition supposed to present the start, the onset or the commencement, be present also at the end, as the conclusion or termination? To answer this question, Thompson helpfully employs the obstetric metaphor, otherwise a commonplace in philosophies of historical change. Thompson contends that 'after all, birth comes at the end of a pregnancy, not at the beginning, even though from the first day we anticipate what the birth and the life of the new New will be like'.⁴⁴⁴ Adopting this analogy, it becomes clearer how the true utopian society of the future, the 'new New', can be present both at the beginning and at the end at the same time: as the last phase of pregnancy, it presents the end, and as the start of the life of a new human being, or at least the more independent kind of life, it presents the beginning. The essential point to understand here is that even if the essence of the true utopian society lies in its radical difference from the whole of history that preceded it, or as Bloch, in following Marx, calls this era, 'prehistory' ('Vorgeschichte'), the true

⁴⁴³ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 1628.

⁴⁴⁴ Thompson, 'What is concrete about Bloch's 'Concrete Utopia' in *Utopia: Social Theory and the Future* ed. by Jacobsen and Tester, p. 45.

utopian society cannot be thought of as something separate or independent of it. The true utopian society comes into being only as the outcome of this process of prehistory.

The nature of this concept of utopia, to which Thompson has referred as 'processual utopia', comes forth most clearly when contrasted to teleological utopia.⁴⁴⁵ The notion of the teleological utopia predicates that utopia simply needs to be realised or implemented in practice, and must thus already exist as such, completed and perfected, even if not in material form. In Christian thought, for example, the counterpart of this utopia is the Kingdom of God. All that needs to happen is for this world to be transferred onto the earth. The coming about of the earthly kingdom must happen by some miracle or apocalypse from outside the material world and without active human intervention. This is not the case for the processual utopia. This utopia indeed also already exists now, but only as a potentiality, and is thus not fully but instead only partially prefigured. It will become fully formed only once it starts to be realised, which in turn demands human action. Furthermore, it does not exist in some separate domain of reality but is constituent of reality itself.

Bloch's exposition of the concept of utopia does not have nihilistic epistemological implications; that is, it does not imply that *nothing at all* can be known, said or foreseen about this ensuing outcome. As explained earlier, because Bloch conceives the existing reality as being penetrated by possibilities which we can access through our Not-Yet-Conscious, we do know something about the utopian future. The crucial thing, however, is not to claim that a vision of utopian society that we posit in the present moment *is*, in the sense that this vision is identical to, or that it corresponds perfectly or exactly to the society of the future. To reiterate this point, to make it perfectly clear: the utopian society that we can conceptualise does not coincide perfectly with the society that might in fact be realised in the future. The existing conceptualisation of this society might perhaps best be thought of as one constitutive step in the realisation of this society, one 'new' on the way to the 'new New'.

⁴⁴⁵ This phrase of 'processual utopia' ('prozeßhaft gehende Utopie) appears also in Bloch's own writings, including in his lecture on the disappointment of hope. See Bloch, 'Kann Hoffnung Enttäuscht Werden?', *Literarische Aufsätze*, p. 388.

The notion of processual utopia helps us to complement the idea of concrete utopian thinking as an element of Critical Theory, as a critical-theoretical practice. In the last section of the preceding chapter, I explained the meaning of the concept of concrete utopia for Bloch, and subsequently, on the basis of this meaning, outlined what concrete utopian thinking could be. I advance the idea of processual thinking in an analogous fashion. Before proceeding, it should be noted that concrete and processual thinking are not two mutually exclusive forms of utopian thinking, but are instead fully compatible. I have distinguished between them only for purposes of clarity.

It is useful to consider the idea of processual utopian thinking independently because it shows directly that utopian thinking is not inherently dangerous or destructive to desirable social change. The idea that utopian thinking, in the sense of positive conceptualisations of a better future, is indeed dangerous has been explicitly articulated, among others, by the prominent French critical theorist Michel Foucault: 'But the idea of a program of proposals is dangerous. As soon as a program is presented, it becomes a law, and there's a prohibition against inventing [...] The program must be wide open'.⁴⁴⁶ Foucault sees utopian thinking to consist not only in programmes, but in programmes which eventually become or evolve into laws.⁴⁴⁷ As laws, utopian thinking is destructive because it prohibits any deviation from itself, and thus prohibits the creation, development and invention of other, perhaps even more desirable ideas of the good. But why does utopian thinking need to become laws, or better, why should we recognise its ideas as fixed, absolute or universally valid? This does not need to be the case. Once we substitute, as the object

⁴⁴⁶ Michel Foucault, 'Friendship as a Way of Life', in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth, Essential works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, Vol. 1, ed. by Paul Rabinow, trans. by Robert Hurley et al. (New York: The New Press, 1997), pp. 135-41 (p. 139).

⁴⁴⁷ This quotation of Foucault should not be understood as a comprehensive representation of his stance on utopian thinking more generally. In fact, Foucault considers that, especially under the circumstances of the postwar era, a viable alternative to socialism needs to be constructed, and that intellectuals have a role to play in this construction. See Foucault, 'Das Wissen als Verbrechen', in *Michel Foucault, Schriften in vier Bänden Dits et Écrits*, Vol. III, trans. by Daniel Defert et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), pp. 105-14. Foucault, moreover, advances the notion of 'heterotopia', an alternative to singular utopian blueprint, that does in many respects resonate with concept of 'processual utopia' developed here. See Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', trans. by Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, 16:1 (1986), 22-27.

represented by utopian thinking, a teleological utopia with a processual utopia, utopian thinking does not correspond to a programme, but to something more fluid and open. I call this form of utopian thinking processual thinking, which Thompson too has indicated in his discussion of a 'plan' that is 'purely contingent', a plan that constantly reacts to the contingent emergence of new circumstances.⁴⁴⁸ In Thompson's phrasing, this notion 'restores utopian thinking that would not go as far as, but therefore also simultaneously went beyond, the limitations of any reified and programmatic blueprint'.⁴⁴⁹ By saying that processual utopian thinking would not go 'as far as' a programmatic blueprint, Thompson means that it does not claim to identify with the true, absolute utopia. At the same time, processual utopian thinking also goes beyond a blueprint: the contingency of its content, which it openly admits to, does not restrict or inhibit human action and thinking in the same way as programmes or laws. Instead of being restricted to the realisation of the absolute utopia, utopian thinking in its processual form is constructive of it. Once we adopt Bloch's notion of processual utopia, then utopia becomes a world that 'could be there if we could only do something for it. Not only if we travel there, but *in that* we travel there the island of utopia arises out of the sea of the possible — utopia, but with new contents'.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁸ Thompson, 'Ernst Bloch and the Spirituality of Utopia', p. 444.

⁴⁴⁹ Thompson, 'Religion, Utopia, and the Metaphysics of Contingency', in *Privatization of Hope*, ed. by Thompson and Žižek, p. 83.

⁴⁵⁰ Bloch, 'Etwas fehlt', p. 352.

Conclusion

The very general question that motivated my dissertation was the methodology of Critical Theory. How is Critical Theory done? More specifically, how is Critical Theory done with respect to its self-defined objective of facilitating progressive social change? What are the ends, methods, means, practices or tools it should employ to attain this objective? 'Going to the streets', in one or another form, might in fact be the most straightforward answer to this question. I am, however, interested if critical theorists *qua* critical theorists have an additional, somewhat separate role to play in this process. Can their skills, capacities, knowledges, ways of arguing and writing, diagnosing and analysing, reasoning and criticising, abstracting and synthesising be utilised productively above, beyond, and in conjunction with public activism? It is, of course, clear that any effective employment of these more strictly conceptual means will depend on their interaction with public activism itself. The relationship between Critical Theorists and society, or their position in it, is, despite its significance, not my concern here. My concern is instead solely the form or the nature of critical theorists' conceptual means.

Critique, or more specifically, critique of the existing society, social critique, stands as the foremost possibility for these means. Critical Theory mounted the central appeal of the Enlightenment that, as Kant summarised it, 'to critique everything must submit'.⁴⁵¹ Hegel and Marx sustained this fondness for critique, and, in parallel further developed and transformed it. Hegel renounced Kant's conception of critique, a conception that presupposes the existence of an autonomous subject, and Marx subsequently turned aspects of Hegel's critique on its head. By the turn of the twentieth century Marx's approach to critique was upheld, and yet also repealed. Max Weber, Georg Lukács and finally the Critical Theorists themselves renounced the instrumentality of the existing practices of critique, but not of critique itself. With Critical Theory, critique became synonymous with its method per se. It is, after all, called *Critical* Theory. In Critical Theory critique has indeed often been

⁴⁵¹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 100-01.

complemented by other tools, such as by diagnosis and analysis (for example, in order to posit an aspect of the existing society as wrong, this aspect first needs to be identified among many others). The notion of critique, however, has functioned as the umbrella term, colonising all others.

Over the past few decades, many have recognised the fruits of two centuries of critique as bittersweet. Nietzsche anticipated this sentiment, doubting the purely positive effects of forcing everything to critical interrogation and unmasking. That critique has run out of steam is a claim that today extends across the various political orientations of philosophers. Besides Bruno Latour, Peter Sloterdijk and Slavoj Žižek represent two further voices to have forcefully articulated the critique of critique.⁴⁵² Alain Badiou talks about ‘the crisis of negation’, specifically ‘the conception of negation which was a creative one’, or, as I have called it, of negation in which the positive or constructive part is supposed to always already be included.⁴⁵³ Within literary theory, Rita Felski has drawn attention to the limitations of critique, and with respect to the existing socio-political circumstances Naomi Klein has contended that ‘no is not enough’.⁴⁵⁴ Amy Allen and Nikolas Kompridis have directed their skepticism of critique more exclusively at Critical Theory. What is distinct in this strand of disapproval of purely critical practices is its immanent invitation towards utopian thinking as the alternative that could complement critique. Whereas Allen calls for restoration of the ‘anticipatory-utopian moment’ of Critical Theory, Kompridis’s proposal consists in reorienting critique towards

⁴⁵² In his public lectures and newspaper articles and blog posts Žižek repeatedly emphasises that the failure of the contemporary left can be traced to its inability to construct an alternative to the present capitalist society. See, e.g., ‘Only a radicalised left can save Europe’, *New Statesman*, 25 June (2014), <<http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2014/06/slavoj-zizek-only-radicalised-left-can-save-europe>> [accessed 17 August 2017]; and ‘Why There Are No Viable Political Alternatives to Unbridled Capitalism’, *Big Think*, 27 November (2016), <<http://bigthink.com/videos/slavoj-zizek-on-the-failures-of-the-leftist-movement>> [accessed 17 August 2017]. See also two of his latest books: *The Trouble in Paradise: from the End of History to the End of Capitalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2015) and *The Courage of Hopelessness: Chronicles of a Year of acting dangerously* (London: Allen Lane, 2017). For Sloterdijk, see ‘The Space of Global Capitalism and its Imaginary Imperialism: An Interview with Peter Sloterdijk’, in *Medias Res. Peter Sloterdijk’s Spherological Poetics of Being*, ed. by Willem Schinkel and Liesbeth Noordegraaf-Eelens (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011).

⁴⁵³ Alain Badiou, ‘The Crisis of Negation: An Interview with Alain Badiou’, interviewed by John van Houdt, *Continent*, 1.4 (2011), 234–38 (p. 234).

⁴⁵⁴ Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015); Naomi Klein, *No is not enough: defeating the new Shock Politics* (London: Allen Lane, 2017).

‘disclosure’, disclosure of the possibilities, yet to be noticed or attained, of another world.⁴⁵⁵ It is not entirely clear why utopian thinking is immediately perceived as this alternative or complementing method to critique. Above all, it seems, this suggestion is derived from a mere hunch, even if a very strong one, that Critical Theory’s commitment to a radically better future must also have been implanted into its fabric, that its objective to attain a specific kind of future must somehow also feature in the ways this objective is to be attained.

I too have approached my dissertation with these two preliminary judgements, one of critique as unsatisfactory, deficient or even destructive, and the other of utopian thinking as the other possible, immanently available method or end of Critical Theory. The thoughts, research and writing that were spurred by these initial sentiments subsequently sharpened into the question of the ends of utopian thinking in Critical Theory. The ensuing investigation of these ends has been historical as well as critical. The historical trajectory itself is complex, and consists of at least two aspects. The first aspect concerns the actual historical presence or existence of utopian thinking in the writings of Critical Theorists. In Marx, the figure who exerted most influence on the tradition of Critical Theory, utopian thinking was constitutive of his theorising. In the first instance this is evident from Marx’s writings themselves. His ideas of species-being and non-alienated labour unveil the radically different and more desirable nature of human beings, one that would prevail in the future communist society. Some of the assertions of the early Marx give the reader the impression that, in such a society, the self of the one would merge with the selves of the others, leaving one to never be truly on her own again. One’s wishes, needs, desires, worries, pains and troubles would coalesce with our wishes, needs, desires, worries, pains and troubles. This fusion of the individual with her community presents, however, only one face of Marx’s species-being. Only its other face furnishes this concept as a properly utopian one, in the sense of being ‘too good to be true’. While one completely identifies with the others, the individual maintains its individuality, its uniqueness, its singular identity. It is this double

⁴⁵⁵ Amy Allen, ‘Emancipation without Utopia: Subjection, Modernity, and the Normative Claims of Feminist Critical Theory’, *Hypatia*, 30:3 (2015), 513-29 (p. 514); Kompridis, ‘Disclosing Possibility: The Past and Future of Critical Theory’, p. 334. For an extended version of Kompridis’s article see his book *Critique and Disclosure: Critical Theory between Past and Future* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

insistence on the individual being identifying as strongly with herself as she does with her community that infuses Marx's conception of human nature with something strongly appealing. The intensified closeness between individuals does not come at the cost of diminished diversity among them. In fact, the opposite is true: in a communist society, the supposed impossibility of being at the same time one with the others and one with oneself is overcome: 'Only in community [with others has each] individual the means of cultivating his gifts in all directions; only in the community, therefore, is personal freedom possible'.⁴⁵⁶ That utopian thinking was indeed constitutive of Marx's writings becomes further evident once Marx's philosophical anthropology is complemented with a list of the institutional characteristics of a society inhabited by species-beings. The foremost such institutional characteristic is common ownership of the means of production. Marx's utopianism becomes even more visible once we refocus our gaze from Marx's writings themselves to their broader historical context of the mid-nineteenth century. One of the most marked characteristics of this era was nothing but the presence of utopian thinking in its politics. The notion of the communist or socialist society was then very much present. In the sense that this society did differ radically from the existing one, its notion can be described as utopian. Among other political forces, it was the First International that effectively embodied and advocated for socialism. For all the disagreements that prevailed among the individual parties of this organisation, eventually leading to its dissolution, this diverse array of Marxist, anarchist, socialist, communist and more liberal member-groups was united in its struggle against the rising capitalist order and in its replacement by a society defending the interests of the workers. Marx was both a theoretician and an activist involved in the activities of the First International and was committed to many of its objectives and ideals. Insofar as we accept my suggestion that these ideals of socialism can be described as utopian, Marx too should be perceived as engaging in the practice of utopian thinking. One could, of course, argue that relative to some of his fellow communist and socialist sympathisers, Marx's vision of communism appears basic and vague, and moreover, that relative to Marx's corpus as a whole, very few pages and lines are dedicated to spelling out this vision. Yet, neither of these two considerations undermines my argument that utopian thinking presents

⁴⁵⁶ Marx and Engels, *Die deutsche Ideologie*, p. 74.

one essential dimension of Marx's thinking. Both of these considerations do not take into account the broader historical context to a sufficient extent. The first looks at Marx's writings almost independently of that context, whereas the second judges the existence of Marx's utopianism solely on the basis of a comparison with a small set of his contemporaries. Perhaps the most crucial question to be asked regarding the place of utopian thinking in Marx needs to consider the relationship between his writings and the extent to which utopian vision was already available in the wider political discourse. Perhaps the very fact that such a notion was readily available was one of the reasons why Marx did not dedicate much time to elaborating it.

Through Marx's influence, utopian thinking was instilled in the foundations of Critical Theory. These kernels of utopian thinking were, however, never given the proper chance to grow and develop into a substantial dimension of Critical Theory. While the legacy of early Critical Theory is ambivalent — on the one hand, there is Adorno's thought, lacking basically any positive conceptualisation of communism, and, on the other hand, there are Bloch's writings that brim with utopian expressions — Critical Theory today stands as a non-utopian intellectual tradition. The ambivalence in early Critical Theory is complex, and the designation of Adorno as a non-utopian thinker and of Bloch as a utopian one holds only in certain respects. The main qualification of Bloch's utopian thinking is that it is in no way a straightforward continuation of Marx's. Nor does it correspond neatly to the definition of utopian thinking I have outlined in my introduction, which is, in fact, inspired by Marx's utopian thinking in the first place. Bloch's *Prinzip Hoffnung*, with its format of a utopian encyclopaedia is often intractable, his 'Spuren' are as incomprehensible as Adorno's constellations, and his notion of *Heimat* does not inform us much about communism. A comprehensive and nuanced account of the nature, form and kind of Bloch's utopian thinking has not yet been provided by Bloch scholarship. Although this dissertation attempts to provide such an analysis only in a preliminary and provisional manner, it has shown that some aspects of Bloch's utopian thinking are congruent with positive or affirmative thinking. Bloch introduced many neologisms and literary figures in his accounts of a utopian society, formulating them at odds with prevailing grammatical rules, and combining them with criticism of the existing society. All of these modifications ensued in his new variety of utopian thinking. Yet, the foremost object of this new thinking remains utopian society itself. The recourses and detours that Bloch takes in disclosing this

utopian society exist and need to be acknowledged. However, they also need to be put aside if we are to recognise the positive or affirmative nature of his utopian language. In contrast to Adorno, Bloch insists that utopian thinking must provide images of what utopia *is*.

My conception of the historical trajectory of utopian thinking in Critical Theory both elaborates on and disputes those offered by existing scholarship. The elaboration is a very simple one: instead of seeing early Critical Theory to be synonymous with the names of Adorno, Horkheimer and Benjamin, I also include Bloch, for which, just as for the established notion, exist good historical reasons.⁴⁵⁷ There is, of course, no single correct way to group individual thinkers into intellectual traditions, and my aim has not been to argue that my delineation is in any way superior. But it is precisely the arbitrariness entailed in the labelling of intellectual traditions that should be recognised and attended to. This labelling presents an important factor conditioning the process of knowledge creation and transmission, including simply the exclusion of certain ideas by including certain others. The boundaries of intellectual traditions should thus constantly be renegotiated: the ideas of those thinkers who are deemed to belong to, or to represent them, should constantly be questioned, and of those who lie outside them not consigned to oblivion.

The historical trajectory that ensues from resuscitating the name of Bloch shatters our accepted understanding of what Critical Theory is and does. This shattering consists not only in a certain enrichment and increased complexity. These occur whenever we broaden the set of specific inputs we take into consideration. Rather, the shattering consists in the alternative light thrown by these new considerations onto our interpretation of what was previously there. More concretely: the ideas of Bloch inform our interpretation of Adorno in a different way than has been done before. The focus on Adorno is partially responsible for today's conviction that early Critical Theory preserved the essential ethos of utopian thinking. My dissertation has shown why this conviction is problematic, and why it might be more appropriate to see Adorno as abandoning utopian thinking. Although his utopianism has been recognised as very novel — as negative thinking — this practice has

⁴⁵⁷ See Introduction, pp. 34-35.

thereby allegedly preserved its place in early Critical Theory. If utopianism received a different place — a negative place — this place is still a place, as opposed to a no-place. Negative utopian thinking is, after all, interpreted as utopian thinking, and not as non-utopian thinking. The transformation of utopian thinking that this method or practice of Critical Theory underwent in Adorno's thinking has so far been understood as a slight tweaking, a minor alternation, as opposed to a fundamental reconfiguration or a complete change. This course of claims changes once we bring Bloch into the picture. Bloch advanced yet another novel kind of utopian thinking. By juxtaposing him to Adorno, one is compelled to draw a question mark under the supposedly utopian images of Adorno. Bloch does not provide explicit arguments as to why it is problematic to conceive of these images as utopian. Nevertheless, his writings prompt us to take another proper look at Adorno's negative utopias. I have argued that interpretations of negative utopias as offering another way to depict their positive side have turned into a certain dogma in Adorno's scholarship. Adorno might have said that 'utopia lies essentially in the determinate negations' and that 'the consummate negativity one squarely faces explodes into its mirror-image', but once we actually attempt to understand where and how utopia 'lies' in the criticism of the existing society, or, how the mirror image of the negative 'explodes', we realise that, at worst, it does not at all, or at best, it conceals the positive almost completely from our view.⁴⁵⁸ The historical trajectory that ensues from the interpretation of Adorno through the lens of Bloch is thus more radical than the existing one. At its core lies the claim of a radical reconfiguration and suppression of utopian thinking in early Critical Theory: Marx's utopian ferments were not preserved but abandoned. At the same time, my interpretation highlights that the suppression of utopianism was not total: by including Bloch as one of its representatives we can see that Critical Theory branched out in another direction that indeed deserves to be designated as utopian. So far, however, this Blochian branch remains above all ingrained in history, whereas the Adornian one grew into a part and parcel of the present.

The second aspect of the historical thread of my dissertation highlights additional reasons why the suppression of utopian thinking in early Critical Theory should not

⁴⁵⁸ Adorno, in Bloch 'Etwas fehlt', *Tendenz-Latenz-Utopie*, p. 362; *Minima Moralia*, p. 281.

be conceived of as total. This aspect corresponds to the reconstruction of the Critical Theorists' own views on what the ends of utopian thinking in Critical Theory are or should be. In other words: what did specifically Marx, Adorno and Bloch hold the role of utopian thinking in Critical Theory to be? This reconstruction has been impeded by the fact that none of these thinkers explicitly posed this question to themselves. This is the case especially with Marx. At that time, the vision of communism lay on the horizon, and although the degree to which this vision ought to be concretised presented a contestable issue, the non-existence of the vision itself was not conceivable. Further considerations of how, why and in what sense the vision of communism ought to be specified were seized in advance by Marx's idea that such considerations are unnecessary. Inevitably, Marx thought, certain groups in society would move the train of history forward, and, moreover, move it in the right direction. But history did not advance along this route, and culminated instead in a near annihilation of the West. The Critical Theorists offered one explanation for this turn of history. Their explanation posited that a specific objective condition in history is not a guarantee for how history as a whole would unfold, but that history is, in turn, dependent also on the prevailing ideas and beliefs, their propagation and integration into the social fabric, as well as on the subjects themselves. Adorno was one of the thinkers who fully adhered to this explanation. The problem was that this explanation entailed another seed that yet again prevented a serious engagement with the question of whether and how utopian thinking could be utilised to facilitate the rerouting of history onto the right tract. If utopia lies in the realm that is cognitively inaccessible, inaccessible under any circumstances, and inaccessible especially under the existing circumstances of the utmost falseness and wrongness, how could it then be conceptualised? Adorno concluded that indeed it cannot be conceptualised, at least not positively. Since any attempt towards such articulation would result in another mere tool of ideology, Adorno issued the *Utopieverbot* and removed positive utopian thinking from the toolbox of Critical Theory. Adorno was, however, not completely content in imposing this prohibition. His mistrust emanated from the fact that the toolbox of Critical Theory, at least in comparison to Marx's, appeared impoverished. Criticism or negation of the bourgeois ideology on its own seemed insufficient or inappropriate, or even destructive in relation to the very objective of Critical Theory. Adorno, however, never articulated the reasons for this concern, or even the concern itself. It does, however, seem to me that the two have been captured very aptly by the following verses:

One just keeps saying, 'No... No... No...'
 Head bowed, hat in hand,
 A cringing, cunning little step back,
 With each dialectical evasion,
 Retreating, receding, 'no... no... no...'
 Until one simply disappears... ⁴⁵⁹

By attesting to the ever-diminishing strength and weakened posture of negation the poem elicits something that could perhaps be described as its annihilating ethos. Its message concerns not only the insufficiency of critique, but also its utmost futility. At least in some instances Adorno acknowledged this futility, and he reflected on some alternatives to critique, including utopian thinking. Yet, by avoiding any direct, open or explicit description of a utopian society, Adorno set himself a very difficult task, the aspirations of which, as I contended in my criticism of negative utopia, he failed to fulfil. Bloch too contended that criticism on its own is ineffective and even counterproductive. The reason for this lies in Bloch's understanding of what human beings are at their core, of how they act and function. Bloch conceives of human beings as structured simultaneously by positivity and negativity; there is always something that we are, but in the midst of this determined presence also lies an undetermined lack or absence. What is furthermore innate to human beings, in Bloch's view, is the constant attempt to overcome and fill this lack. This attempt takes the form of longing, yearning, striving, craving and wishing. Or, as Bloch put it: 'Primarily, everybody lives in the future, because they strive, past things only come later, and as yet genuine present is almost never there at all'.⁴⁶⁰ For Bloch, the evidence for our living in the future is the existence of cognitive processes of longing and striving, of looking forward, towards the future. The fact that so much of our cognition is concerned with the future, Bloch argues, also turns human beings themselves into beings that exist, live in, or inhabit this future. These cognitive processes are, on the one hand, positive. They create or produce the content that

⁴⁵⁹ Mark Leyner, 'Gone with the Mind', *The Paris Review*, 2012 (2015), p. 32.

⁴⁶⁰ Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, p. 2.

inhabits or occupies the space of the negative. Yet, on the other hand, they are constitutive of negativity, their very existence is vital to our recognition of ourselves as uncompleted beings. This two-sided nature of longing is one reason why the positive and the negative are inseparable, even if the differentiation between the two has been central to the arguments developed across this dissertation.

This positive/negative nature of longing is not its only distinct two-sided characteristic. Another one concerns the directional nature of its productivity. While the subjects, in their efforts to overstep our edges, self-generate the content that is to fill the lack, they are, of course, not its only source. Just as Marx, Bloch too believed that no self exists independently of its environment and of other human beings. This world outside the subject thus also informs and feeds into the productive processes of longing and striving. But not all that lies outside ourselves is equally conducive to enter these processes, it is specifically what Bloch calls the content of hope, something that is allied with fullness and goodness, reaching into the future, that protests and thereby stands in opposition to the emptiness and dissatisfaction confined to the present. The dreams of a better life already available out there affect and shape one's own dreams of a better life, which then condition oneself and one's actions, which are in turn necessary in constructing an actual utopia. For Bloch, the depiction of utopia is also the building of utopia. Here we come back to the processual nature of utopian thinking which I discussed at the end of Chapter 5. There I argued that this processuality highlights the fact that an individual depiction of a utopia conceptualised in one moment should always be left open to revision, as it presents only one inroad into the broader process of conceptualising this society. The processuality, however, can also refer to the 'process of building or constructing' this society, whereby its depictions become its participating ingredients. This processual 'tweaking' of the notion of utopian thinking provides one simple yet significant argument as to why dreams, outlines, and visions of a better life, of a more humane way of living together, need to be created. Objects that are concerned with the future, that speak of the future, sustain and supplement subjects' own concerns with the future. One's projections forward and those supplied by others continuously reinforce each other. If critical theorists, generally speaking, do not include or address these projections in their writings, they jeopardise their readers' receptiveness, or access to their writings. If their texts are to have any effect with respect to social change, a link, connection or bridge

between the authors and the audience needs to exist. Since utopian thinking is one foundation of this link, critical theorists simply ought to employ it.

The stakes that Critical Theory takes up in its refusal of utopian thinking as one of its tools might be particularly acute in the current historical conjuncture in the West: the staggering rise of the populist and authoritarian far right parties.⁴⁶¹ The rise in the right populist movements has in fact been paralleled by an increase in popularity of the left ones.⁴⁶² The left, however, has been relatively much less effective in gaining public recognition and backing. At least as far as Trump and Brexit are concerned, the common denominator in the explanations of their success appears to be the phenomenon of 'white working class anger'.⁴⁶³ As Wendy Brown writes, what 'brought Donald Trump to power' was 'a predominately white and uneducated population, animated by discontent and often brimming with rage'.⁴⁶⁴ This discontent stems from both the material and normative displacement that this particular social group has experienced.⁴⁶⁵ The move to the post-industrial society over the last couple of decades has not been socially all-inclusive, neither in terms of new job opportunities, nor with respect to alternative lifestyles and progressive moral views, including multiculturalism, environmental protection, and gender equality. The values, beliefs and expectations of the white working class have become unfounded and delegitimised, carving into their very identities or

⁴⁶¹ In addition to Trump's presidency, manifestations of the upsurge in authoritarian populism include the British vote in the June 2016 referendum in favour of Brexit; the 2015 election of Jarosław Kaczyński's government in Poland that is attacking the courts and the press while undermining the teaching of evolution and climate science in public schools; the consolidation of power by the government of Viktor Orbán in Hungary, a government that has weakened the courts and the press while attacking immigrants, Jews, gays, and European bureaucrats; and the popularity in France of Marine Le Pen's anti-immigrant National Front party.

⁴⁶² Starting with Syriza in Greece shortly after the eruption of the financial crisis in 2008, left populism is partially still alive in the present in Jeremy Corbyn's Labour.

⁴⁶³ Cf. Sonja Avlijaš, 'From Brexit to Trump: Why mobilising anger in a constructive way is now one of the key challenges in modern politics', *LSE European Politics and Policy* <<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/euoppblog/2016/06/30/brexit-trump-mobilising-anger/>> [accessed 1 August 2017]; Hugh Gusterson, 'From Brexit to Trump: Anthropology and the rise of nationalist populism', *American Ethnologist, Journal of American ethnological society*, 44:2 (2017), 209-14.

⁴⁶⁴ Wendy Brown, 'How has the right become the party of freedom and authoritarianism' [not yet published, cited with the author's permission]

⁴⁶⁵ Ronald F. Inglehart and Pippa Norris, 'Trump, Brexit, and the rise of Populism: Economic have-nots and cultural backlash', *Harvard Kennedy School, Faculty Research Working Paper Series*, RWP16-026, August (2016).

subjectivities. Or, in Blochian terms: the constitutive lack of these individuals has deepened. Something they maintained or possessed has been taken away, thus increasing the gap which separates them from the realization of their dreams, hopes and wishes. These hopes and wishes, however, have not been weakened or demolished, or at least, Bloch would have argued that they have not been: dreaming, hoping and longing is the one human activity that *never* ceases. It does not seem too big a leap to argue that the greater these lacks or gaps are, the more likely it is that individuals become receptive to the available material that could readily fill them. This material certainly includes the readily available promises of an essentially better future. Trump's 'Make America Great Again' and UKIP's 'Take Back Control' carry such promises.⁴⁶⁶ It is, however, less clear what leftist slogans, ideas, views and manifestos do the same. The recent left populist movements have not only been relatively less successful in obtaining voters' support, but have also lacked a vision of a systematically different and desirable future. Rather than reaching for and insisting on, as well as simultaneously revising its radical heritage of *equality, solidarity and community*, the left has settled closer to the centre. In contrast, the utopian visions of the right are based openly on its extreme, on the principles of *exclusion, intolerance and inequality*. Critical Theory's refusal to contribute to a formulation of a utopian society which, while maintaining the allure and appeal of the right-wing one, would in contrast be based on progressive values, represents a risk that should not be taken. Eventually the hopes and aspirations of individuals might be channeled towards and consumed by whatever utopian promises are currently available, irrespective of how deeply problematic these might be.

Besides the historical thread, my dissertation also entails a critical thread, concerned above all with Adorno's negative utopias, and his view of the impossibility to envisage them positively. Whereas I have advanced my concerns pertaining to negative utopias, my criticisms of the view of the impossibility of utopian thinking yet need to be spelled out. I have argued that Adorno's ideas of identity thinking and *Kulturindustrie* have played a significant role in displacing utopian thinking from Critical Theory, in particular, by preempting the mere

⁴⁶⁶ Cf. Chris McMillan, 'MakeAmericaGreatAgain: ideological fantasy, American exceptionalism and Donald Trump', *Subjectivity*, 10:2 (2017), 204-22; Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Strangers in their own land: anger and mourning on the American right* (New York: New Press, 2016), pp. 221-31.

possibility to envisage in the present the truly desirable society of the future. Adorno instead rendered all utopian conceptualisations as falsely utopian, that is, as mere duplications of the present society. But is that so? Are our visions of a different society in fact not indicative of a different society, but only of the existing one? The answer to this question depends on the criteria we adopt determining what counts as 'different'. One criterion of Adorno was that of identity thinking itself: whatever content is conceptualised in this form of thinking, it *cannot* be different, it cannot contradict, but merely conform to, what already exists. The viability of this criterion is, of course, dependent on Adorno's highly problematic generalisation that the whole of the existing society is debased and degenerated. Many counterexamples could be provided, both within the society of Adorno's time and in the current one, of practices, values, beliefs and attitudes that do seem to oppose the prevailing normative order. This way of criticising identity thinking does, however, not bring us very far, as we eventually fall back onto the initial deadlock question of how we decide on the norms on what practices or views are sufficiently different from the dominant ones so as to be perceived as actually 'different'. Another critique of identity thinking, informed by Bloch's ontology of the Not-Yet, is more productive. The view of reality as not yet fully developed or determined does undermine Adorno's understanding of identity or positive thinking. In an affirmative sentence, Adorno argues, the copula conjoining a subject with its predicate (for example, 'is') says: 'it is so, not otherwise, and furthermore that 'it should not be anything else: the identity would otherwise performed'.⁴⁶⁷ The meaning of positive thinking shifts in the context of reality as the Not-Yet. Given that it is as fundamental to reality that 'it is so' as that 'it could be different', no articulation of reality, be it positive or negative, cannot posit a conclusive identity between the subject and its predicate. This shift in the meaning of positive thinking is relevant as it, of course, also shifts the meaning of positive utopian thinking: by envisaging a utopian society, one is not excluding other possibilities of good practices and values, one is not denying that the content of the actually existing utopian society of the future will differ from that entailed in one's existing conception of it. Such a reading of utopian visions changes the terms on which the whole controversy regarding their possibility proceeds. The question is now no longer whether we can conceptualise Adorno's 'Other' or Bloch's

⁴⁶⁷ Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, p. 151.

Heimat, but rather, whether we can provide descriptions of societies which in one way or another approach or resemble some dimensions of the radical goodness signified by these concepts. The answer to this reformulated question is more likely to be affirmative. Reconstructing the original question itself clearly indicates the narrowness of Adorno's own position, and calls for the revision of the existing place of utopian thinking in Critical Theory. For once this question of the possibility of utopian thinking will have been settled, the more significant one regarding the actual role of utopian thinking as a tool can finally be properly addressed.

Bloch does not offer a satisfactory answer to this question of the ends of utopian thinking. As Douglas Kellner and Harry O'Hara observe:

It is his *conviction* that only when we project our future in the light of what is, what has been, and what could be can we engage in the creative practice that will produce the world we all want and realize humanity's deepest hopes and dreams.⁴⁶⁸

Bloch does not only consider that one's own hopes and wishes are interdependent with those that are currently available socially and that they mutually reinforce each other, but that certain projections of the future drive, nourish, energise, inspire, motivate and propel individual as well as collective action. The significance of utopian thinking is, according to Bloch, greater and more complex than of something that functions merely as a necessary input to fill the constitutive lack of the subjects. It is, however, not sufficient to simply use this very specific register of driving and striving to convey the greater significance and complexity of the role of utopian thinking. To achieve that, the knowledges and vocabularies of multiple disciplines would have to be brought and advanced together in a new research agenda.

The question of the role of utopian thinking in social change could initially be approached from a historical perspective: have utopian ideas participated in social upheavals or uprisings, both in those which resulted in redistribution of power and in those that were suppressed? This question in fact does not seem very contentious.

⁴⁶⁸ Kellner and O'Hara, 'Utopia and Marxism in Ernst Bloch', p. 16. [italics mine]

Historians tend to agree that some sort of utopian ideas were involved in most revolutionary social transformations. While Bloch himself examined in detail the peasants' revolts in the early sixteenth century, other scholars offer persuasive evidence in support of this claim for later periods of history, including the American and the Russian Revolution, as well as the communist and socialist revolutionary wave in mid-nineteenth century Europe.⁴⁶⁹ The more specific question that would need to be considered is *how* these utopian ideas affected the practices and actions of the individuals and of the movement.

Another avenue towards a comprehensive theory of the role of utopian thinking could be opened by focusing specifically on its affective dimension. By this I mean looking not only at the literature that, alongside that of Bloch, considers the significance of hope as an affect.⁴⁷⁰ Political theory more broadly has in fact recently experienced a revived interest in affect. On the one hand, this revival corresponds to a revision of the long-standing philosophical tradition running from Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hume, Rousseau and Nietzsche that, in examining human beings as rational as well as emotional beings, highlights the role of emotions in politics. Feminist scholars in particular have contributed extensively to this development in political theory.⁴⁷¹ On the other hand, this turn draws heavily on the relevant ideas provided by cognitive neuroscientists. Theorists such as William Connolly, Leslie Paul Thiele, and John Protevi view political action not as an expression of judgements arrived through by the means of reason, but as a complex interaction of various somatic and social processes.⁴⁷² In these theories affect is seen as a distinct

⁴⁶⁹ Cf. Bloch, *Thomas Münzer als Theologe der Revolution*, GA, Vol. 2. For the American Revolution see Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The many-headed hydra: sailors, slaves, commoners, and the hidden history of the revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000); for the communist and socialist revolts Lutz Brangsch and Michael Brie, eds., *Das Kommunistische* (Hamburg: VSA Verlag, 2016); and for the Russian Revolution Bini Adamczak, *Gestern Morgen: Rekonstruktion der Zukunft* (Münster: Unrast Verlag, 2011).

⁴⁷⁰ Cf. Rebecca Solnit, *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities* (Edinburgh: Canongate Canon, 2016); Ronald Aronson, *We: reviving the social hope* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2017); Jonathan Lear, *Radical hope: ethics in the face of cultural devastation* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2006).

⁴⁷¹ Martha Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: essays on philosophy and literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Sara Ahmed, *The cultural politics of emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

⁴⁷² William Connolly, *Neuropolitics: thinking, culture, speed* (Minneapolis, MN; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); Leslie Paul Thiele, *The Heart of Judgment: Practical Wisdom, Neuroscience, and Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); John

layer of experience both prior to and beneath language and intentional consciousness, a bodily and autonomic force that shapes one's views, judgements and beliefs. While these theories would need to be advanced further, to consider the complexities that the specific dimensions of radical social change and utopian thinking add to the picture (for example, how would the conclusions of these theories change when instead of focusing on the individual we were to focus on a group of individuals, and thus instead of individual actions on collective ones), they could serve as a good starting point.

On the basis of a better understanding of the functions of utopian thinking in social change, we could specify further what utopian thinking as a tool or method of Critical Theory could look like. Drawing on Bloch's concepts of concrete and processual utopia, I have outlined some initial features of such practice. Although this specification is rather provisional it does prove valuable as it currently stands. It gives rise to two significant conclusions that directly undermine another set of influential arguments against utopian thinking, namely those provided by the liberal tradition. Although one objective of my dissertation has been to show that the discreditation of utopian thinking that occurred in the previous century should not be ascribed only to this tradition, I have not argued that the liberals have not also been responsible for the demise of utopian thinking. The liberal discourse has undoubtedly played an important role in this process, and continues to do so. Utopian thinking is today, above all, deemed as dangerous, and this is an idea that is in these very terms defended most vehemently by thinkers such as Karl Popper. The processual form of utopian thinking I have defended points to some limitations of Popper's view. The processual interpretation shows that utopian thinking is not necessarily related to the notion of a blueprint, a set of instructions which are devised with an intention to be strictly followed and implemented in reality immediately, without any further consideration. Popper's anti-utopian argument that utopia will inevitably lead to its opposite, a dystopia, a violent upheaval, however, presupposes this very programmatic conception of utopia. That is, Popper presupposes that any articulation of a utopian society strives ultimately and solely for its implementation. But if the activity of utopian thinking is engaged in for other

motives, then Popper's criticism loses its grounds. Another idea ensuing from the processual perspective further impairs the liberal strand of anti-utopianism. Popper in fact acknowledges that prior to attempting a realisation of utopia through violence, individuals might first endeavour to obtain political support by rational means, by 'convincing' those who do not initially share their conception of a utopia into also adopting it. However, achieving an absolute consensus regarding the content of the utopian society is just as little an aspiration of processual utopias as is their immediate, uncompromising realisation. Given that processual utopian thinking builds on the idea that we cannot know the ultimate utopia, but only a multiplicity of its precursors, its aim then cannot be to arrive at a universally shared conception of the former. This, however, does not mean that conversation between alternative utopian visions should be hindered, nor does it mean that *any* articulation of a supposedly good society is to be granted entry to this utopian pool. It rather means that, instead of being focused on reaching an instantaneous agreement between those who disagree, more attention should be paid to understanding the alternatives from their own perspective, which might then in turn render disagreements less strong and conflicting than they might appear initially.

I conclude with the words of one less and one more likely ally of the spirit of this dissertation, John Rawls and Michel Foucault. In his treatise on liberalism Rawls posited: 'A modern democratic society is characterised by a pluralism of comprehensive religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines but by a pluralism of incompatible yet reasonable comprehensive doctrines'.⁴⁷³ Whereas the currently existing modern democracies stand very much removed from a world of co-existing, equally worthy viewpoints and values, the world of utopian thinking could effectively prefigure this 'pluralism of incompatible yet reasonable comprehensive doctrines'. Such a pluralistic conception of utopian thinking would focus more on creating an array of desirable futures and substantiating each of them, and less on achieving an accord among them. Foucault made a similar point with respect to the role that a public intellectual could play in relation to activist social movements:

⁴⁷³ John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. xvi.

What is important is not an authoritarian unification, but a kind of infinite swarming of desiring machines — in school, factories, neighbourhoods, in a day nurseries, in prisons, everywhere. It is not a question of trimming or totalizing all these various partial movements, but of connecting them together on the one stem.⁴⁷⁴

Depictions of such a diversity of utopian visions is where the building of Rawls's utopia could start, for real. On such a tree no single utopia would assume a status of exclusivity, and each and every one would always remain open to change. A depiction of such a utopian tree is, by no means, the exclusive task of Critical Theorists. I have argued only that they too ought to participate in its creation.

⁴⁷⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault, 'The intellectuals and power: a discussion', *Telos*, 16 (1973), p. 105.

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